

Official Report of the
One Hundred Seventy-ninth
Semiannual General

CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Conference Center
Salt Lake City, Utah

October 3 and 4, 2009

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Report of the 179th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The 179th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 3, 2009, at 10:00 a.m.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, October 3 and 4, 2009. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, October 3, at 6:00 p.m.

President Thomas S. Monson presided at all sessions of the conference. He conducted the Sunday morning session. President Henry B. Eyring conducted the Saturday morning and afternoon sessions. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf conducted the priesthood and Sunday afternoon sessions.

The conference was carried by satellite transmission to thousands of Church buildings in many countries. In areas that did not receive this transmission, video recordings of the conference were made available. In addition, television and radio stations carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout North America. The proceedings were also broadcast live over the Internet.

General Authorities

First Presidency: Thomas S. Monson, Henry B. Eyring, and Dieter F. Uchtdorf

Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, David A. Bednar, Quentin L. Cook, D. Todd Christofferson, and Neil L. Andersen

Presidency of the Seventy: Ronald A. Rasband, Claudio R. M. Costa, Steven E. Snow, Walter F. González, L. Whitney Clayton, Jay E. Jensen, and Donald L. Hallstrom

First Quorum of the Seventy: Marcos A. Aidukaitis, Carlos H. Amado, Mervyn B. Arnold, David S. Baxter, Shayne M. Bowen, Gérald Caussé, Yoon Hwan Choi, Craig C. Christensen, Gary J. Coleman, Spencer J. Condie, Lawrence E. Corbridge, Benjamín De Hoyos, John B. Dickson, David F. Evans, Enrique R. Falabella, Eduardo Gavarret, Carlos A. Godoy, Christoffel Golden Jr., C. Scott Grow, Bruce C. Hafen, James J. Hamula, Keith K. Hilbig, Richard G. Hinckley, Marlin K. Jensen, Daniel L. Johnson, Kenneth Johnson, Paul V. Johnson, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Paul E. Koelliker, Erich W. Kopischke, Richard J. Maynes, Marcus B. Nash, Brent H. Nielson, Glenn L. Pace, Allan F. Packer, Kevin W. Pearson, Anthony D. Perkins, Paul B. Pieper, Rafael E. Pino, Bruce D. Porter, Carl B. Pratt, Dale G. Renlund, Michael T. Ringwood, Lynn G. Robbins, Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., Joseph W. Sitati, Ulisses Soares, Gary E. Stevenson, Michael John U. Teh, José A. Teixeira, Octaviano Tenorio, Francisco J. Viñas, William R. Walker, F. Michael Watson, Lance B. Wickman, Jorge F. Zeballos, Claudio D. Zivic, and W. Craig Zwick

Second Quorum of the Seventy: Wilford W. Andersen, Koichi Aoyagi, Tad R. Callister, Craig A. Cardon, Bruce A. Carlson, Don R. Clarke, Keith R. Edwards, Stanley G. Ellis, Bradley D. Foster, Larry W. Gibbons, Spencer V. Jones, Won Yong Ko, James B. Martino, Wolfgang H. Paul, Kent F. Richards, Gregory A. Schwitzer, Lowell M. Snow, Paul K. Sybrowsky, and Kent D. Watson

Presiding Bishopric: H. David Burton, Richard C. Edgley, and Keith B. McMullin

SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first session of the 179th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, October 3, 2009. President Henry B. Eyring conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir, directed by Mack Wilberg and Ryan Murphy, with Clay Christiansen and Richard Elliott as the organists. To begin this session, the choir sang “Glory to God on High.” President Eyring then made the following remarks.

President Henry B. Eyring

Brothers and sisters, we welcome you to the first session of the 179th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and extend a special welcome to members and friends participating here in the Conference Center and throughout the world, wherever you may be. President Thomas S. Monson, who presides at this conference, has asked that I conduct this session.

We acknowledge the General Authorities and the general auxiliary presidencies in attendance at this conference.

We are grateful to the many television and radio stations and satellite and cable systems for offering their facilities as a

public service to bring this conference to a large audience in many areas of the world.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Mack Wilberg and Ryan Murphy, with Clay Christiansen and Richard Elliott at the organ. The choir opened this session by singing “Glory to God on High” and will now favor us with “Rejoice, the Lord Is King!” The invocation will then be offered by Elder John M. Madsen of the Seventy.

The choir sang “Rejoice, the Lord Is King!”

Elder John M. Madsen offered the invocation.

President Eyring

We shall now be pleased to hear from our beloved prophet, President Thomas S. Monson. Following his remarks, the choir will sing “Choose the Right.” At the conclusion of the singing, Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will address us, and he will be followed by Sister Vicki F. Matsumori, second counselor in the Primary general presidency. Following her remarks, Elder L. Whitney Clayton of the Presidency of the Seventy will address us.

President Thomas S. Monson

My beloved brothers and sisters, I extend my greetings to all of you as we commence this, the 179th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

How grateful I am for the age in which we live—an age of such advanced technology that we are able to address you across

the world. As the General Authorities and auxiliary leaders stand here in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, our voices will be reaching you by various means, including radio, television, satellite transmission, and the Internet. Although we will be speaking to you in English, you will be hearing us in some 92 languages.

Building of temples

Since last we met in April of this year, we have dedicated the beautiful Oquirrh Mountain Utah Temple in South Jordan, Utah. Sandwiched between the Draper Utah Temple dedication in March and this most recent dedication of the Oquirrh Mountain Utah Temple in August, a spectacular two-night cultural event was held, featuring youth from both temple districts. The productions retraced the rich legacy of Utah through song and dance. All told, approximately 14,000 youth participated over the two nights.

We continue to build temples. We desire that as many members as possible have an opportunity to attend the temple without having to travel inordinate distances. Worldwide, 83 percent of our members live within 200 miles of a temple. That percentage will continue to increase as we construct new temples around the world. Currently there are 130 temples in operation, with 16 announced or under construction. This morning I am pleased to announce 5 additional temples for which sites are being acquired and which, in coming months and years, will be built in the following locations: Brigham City, Utah; Concepción, Chile; Fortaleza, Brazil; Fort Lauderdale, Florida; and Sapporo, Japan.

Millions of ordinances are performed in the temples each year in behalf of our deceased loved ones. May we continue to be faithful in performing such ordinances for those who are unable to do so for themselves. I love the words of President Joseph F. Smith as he spoke of temple service and of the spirit world beyond mortality. Said he, "Through our efforts in their behalf their chains of bondage will fall from them, and the darkness surrounding

them will clear away, that light may shine upon them and they shall hear in the spirit world of the work that has been done for them by their [people] here, and will rejoice with you in your performance of these duties."¹

Growth of the Church

Brothers and sisters, the Church continues to grow, as it has since being organized over 179 years ago. It is changing the lives of more and more people every year and is spreading far and wide over the earth as our missionary force seeks out those who are looking for the truths which are found in the gospel of Jesus Christ. We call upon all members of the Church to befriend the new converts, to reach out to them, to surround them with love, and to help them feel at home.

I would ask that your faith and prayers continue to be offered in behalf of those areas where our influence is limited and where we are not allowed to share the gospel freely at this time. Miracles can occur as we do so.

Now, my brothers and sisters, we are anxious to listen to the messages which will be presented to us during the next two days. Those who will address us have sought heaven's help and direction as they have prepared their messages. They have been impressed concerning that which they will share with us. That we may be filled with the Spirit of the Lord as we listen and learn is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTE

1. Joseph F. Smith, in Conference Report, Oct. 1916, 6.

The choir sang "Choose the Right."

Elder Richard G. Scott

Need for spiritual guidance

Throughout the ages, many have obtained guidance helpful to resolve challenges in their lives by following the example of respected individuals who resolved similar problems. Today, world conditions change so rapidly that such a course of action is often not available to us.

Personally, I rejoice in that reality because it creates a condition where we, of necessity, are more dependent upon the Spirit to guide us through the vicissitudes of life. Therefore, we are led to seek personal inspiration in life's important decisions.

What can you do to enhance your capacity to be led to correct decisions in your life? What are the principles upon which spiritual communication depends? What are the potential barriers to such communication that you need to avoid?

Learning to be led by the Spirit

President John Taylor wrote: "Joseph Smith, upwards of forty years ago, said to me: 'Brother Taylor, you have received the Holy Ghost. Now follow the influence of that Spirit, and it will lead you into all truth, until by and by, it will become in you a principle of revelation.' Then he told me never to arise in the morning without bowing before the Lord, and dedicating myself to him during that day."¹

Father in Heaven knew that you would face challenges and be required to make some decisions that would be beyond your own ability to decide correctly. In His plan of happiness, He included a provision for you to receive help with such challenges and decisions during your mortal life. That assistance will come to you through the Holy Ghost as spiritual guidance. It is a power, beyond your own capability, that a loving Heavenly Father wants you to use consistently for your peace and happiness.

I am convinced that there is no simple formula or technique that would immediately allow you to master the ability to be guided by the voice of the Spirit. Our Father expects you to learn how to obtain that divine help by exercising faith in Him and His Holy Son, Jesus Christ. Were you to receive inspired guidance just for the asking, you would become weak and ever more dependent on Them. They know that essential personal growth will come as you struggle to learn how to be led by the Spirit.

What may appear initially to be a daunting task will be much easier to manage over time as you consistently strive to recognize and follow feelings prompted by the Spirit. Your confidence in the direction you receive from the Holy Ghost will also become stronger. I witness that as you gain experience and success in being guided by the Spirit, your confidence in the impressions you feel can become more certain than your dependence on what you see or hear.

Spirituality yields two fruits. The first is inspiration to know what to do. The second is power, or the capacity to do it. These two capacities come together. That's why Nephi could say, "I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded."² He knew the spiritual laws upon which inspiration and power are based. Yes, God answers prayer and gives us spiritual direction when we live obediently and exercise the required faith in Him.

Responding to spiritual impressions

Now I share an experience that taught me a way to gain spiritual guidance. One Sunday I attended the priesthood meeting of a Spanish branch in Mexico City. I vividly recall how a humble Mexican priesthood leader struggled to communicate the truths of the gospel in his lesson material. I noted the intense desire he had to share

those principles he strongly valued with his quorum members. He recognized that they were of great worth to the brethren present. In his manner there was an evidence of a pure love of the Savior and love of those he taught.

His sincerity, purity of intent, and love permitted a spiritual strength to envelop the room. I was deeply touched. Then I began to receive personal impressions as an extension of the principles taught by that humble instructor. They were personal and related to my assignments in the area. They came in answer to my prolonged, prayerful efforts to learn.

As each impression came, I carefully wrote it down. In the process, I was given precious truths that I greatly needed in order to be a more effective servant of the Lord. The details of the communication are sacred and, like a patriarchal blessing, were for my individual benefit. I was given specific directions, instructions, and conditioned promises that have beneficially altered the course of my life.

Subsequently, I visited the Sunday School class in our ward, where a very well-educated teacher presented his lesson. That experience was in striking contrast to the one enjoyed in the priesthood meeting. It seemed to me that the instructor had purposely chosen obscure references and unusual examples to illustrate the principles of the lesson. I had the distinct impression that this instructor was using the teaching opportunity to impress the class with his vast store of knowledge. At any rate, he certainly did not seem as intent on communicating principles as had the humble priesthood leader.

In that environment, strong impressions began to flow to me again. I wrote them down. The message included specific counsel on how to become more effective as an instrument in the hands of the Lord. I received such an outpouring of impressions that were so personal that I felt it was not appropriate to record them in the midst of a Sunday School class. I sought

a more private location, where I continued to write the feelings that flooded into my mind and heart as faithfully as possible. After each powerful impression was recorded, I pondered the feelings I had received to determine if I had accurately expressed them in writing. As a result, I made a few minor changes to what had been written. Then I studied their meaning and application in my own life.

Subsequently I prayed, reviewing with the Lord what I thought I had been taught by the Spirit. When a feeling of peace came, I thanked Him for the guidance given. I was then impressed to ask, "Is there yet more to be given?" I received further impressions, and the process of writing down the impressions, pondering, and praying for confirmation was repeated. Again I was prompted to ask, "Is there more I should know?" And there was. When that last, most sacred experience was concluded, I had received some of the most precious, specific, personal direction one could hope to obtain in this life. Had I not responded to the first impressions and recorded them, I would not have received the last, most precious guidance.

What I have described is not an isolated experience. It embodies several true principles regarding communication from the Lord to His children here on earth. I believe that you can leave the most precious, personal direction of the Spirit unheard because you do not respond to, record, and apply the first promptings that come to you.

Impressions of the Spirit can come in response to urgent prayer or unsolicited when needed. Sometimes the Lord reveals truth to you when you are not actively seeking it, such as when you are in danger and do not know it. However, the Lord will not force you to learn. You must exercise your agency to authorize the Spirit to teach you. As you make this a practice in your life, you will be more perceptive to the feelings that come with spiritual guidance. Then, when that guidance comes,

sometimes when you least expect it, you will recognize it more easily.

Barriers to spiritual communication

The inspiring influence of the Holy Spirit can be overcome or masked by strong emotions, such as anger, hate, passion, fear, or pride. When such influences are present, it is like trying to savor the delicate flavor of a grape while eating a jalapeño pepper. Both flavors are present, but one completely overpowers the other. In like manner, strong emotions overcome the delicate promptings of the Holy Spirit.

Sin is addictive; self-degenerating; conducive to other strains of corruption; deadening to spirituality, conscience, and reason; blinding to reality; contagious; destructive to mind, body, and spirit. Sin is spiritually corrosive. Unrestrained it becomes all-consuming. It is overcome by repentance and righteousness.

I share a warning. Satan is extremely good at blocking spiritual communication by inducing individuals, through temptation, to violate the laws upon which spiritual communication is founded. With some, he is able to convince them that they are not able to receive such guidance from the Lord.

Destructive influence of pornography

Satan has become a master at using the addictive power of pornography to limit individual capacity to be led by the Spirit. The onslaught of pornography in all of its vicious, corroding, destructive forms has caused great grief, suffering, and heartache and has destroyed marriages. It is one of the most damning influences on earth. Whether it be through the printed page, movies, television, obscene lyrics, vulgarities on the telephone, or flickering personal computer screen, pornography is overpoweringly addictive and severely damaging. This potent tool of Lucifer

degrades the mind and the heart and the soul of any who use it. All who are caught in its seductive, tantalizing web and remain so will become addicted to its immoral, destructive influence. For many, that addiction cannot be overcome without help. The tragic pattern is so familiar. It begins with curiosity that is fueled by its stimulation and is justified by the false premise that when done privately, it does no harm to anyone else. For those lulled by this lie, the experimentation goes deeper, with more powerful stimulations, until the trap closes and a terribly immoral, addictive habit exercises its vicious control.

Participation in pornography in any of its lurid forms is a manifestation of unbridled selfishness. How can a man, particularly a priesthood bearer, not think of the emotional and spiritual damage caused to women, especially his wife, by such abhorrent activity?

Well did inspired Nephi declare, “And [the devil] will . . . pacify, and lull them away into carnal security, . . . and thus [he] cheateth their souls, and leadeth them away carefully down to hell.”³

If you are ensnared in pornography, make a total commitment to overcome it now. Find a quiet place; pray urgently for help and support. Be patient and obedient. Don’t give up.

Parents, be aware that the addiction of pornography can begin with youth at a very early age. Take preventative action to avoid that tragedy. Stake presidents and bishops, warn of this evil. Invite anyone you consider captured by it to come to you for help.

An individual with foundation standards and an enduring commitment to obey them is not easily led astray. Someone who is increasingly repulsed by grievous sin and who exercises self-restraint outside human influence has character. Repentance will be more efficacious for such an individual. A feeling of remorse after a mistake is a fertile soil wherein repentance can flower.

Consistently guided by the Spirit

Have patience as you are perfecting your ability to be led by the Spirit. By careful practice, through the application of correct principles, and by being sensitive to the feelings that come, you will gain spiritual guidance. I bear witness that the Lord, through the Holy Ghost, can speak to your mind and heart. Sometimes the impressions are just general feelings. Sometimes the direction comes so clearly and so unmistakably that it can be written down like spiritual dictation.⁴

I bear solemn witness that as you pray with all the fervor of your soul with humility and gratitude, you can learn to be

consistently guided by the Holy Spirit in all aspects of your life. I have confirmed the truthfulness of that principle in the crucible of my own life. I testify that you can personally learn to master the principles of being guided by the Spirit. That way, the Savior can guide you to resolve challenges of life and enjoy great peace and happiness. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. John Taylor, *The Gospel Kingdom*, sel. G. Homer Durham (1943), 43–44.
2. 1 Nephi 3:7.
3. 2 Nephi 28:21.
4. See Doctrine and Covenants 8:2.

Vicki F. Matsumori

Whisperings of the Spirit

At the end of the day, a pair of missionaries starts toward home, when one suddenly turns to the other and says, “I feel we need to stop at this one last place.” A home teacher is prompted to call one of the families he visited just a few days before. A young woman plans on attending a school friend’s party yet feels impressed to stay home this time.

How did the missionaries know to knock on the door of someone who had been praying for them? or the home teacher to call a family that was in desperate need? or the young woman to stay away from a situation where her values could be compromised? In each of these situations they were guided by the influence of the Holy Ghost.

Similar experiences happen repeatedly to members throughout the world on a regular basis, and there are those who desire to feel the Spirit guiding them daily in their lives. While each person can learn to recognize the whisperings of the Spirit, that learning process can be facilitated as

others help us understand about the Holy Ghost, share their personal testimonies, and provide an environment where the Spirit can be felt.

Understanding the doctrine

The importance of helping others understand is described in the Doctrine and Covenants. Parents “in Zion, or in any of her stakes which are organized,” are told to help their children “understand the doctrine.”¹

Whether we are in a classroom, a missionary discussion, or a family home evening, teaching the doctrine regarding the Holy Ghost can help others understand this important gift. We learn that while “the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil,”² the right to the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost comes as members are given that gift by the laying on of hands by those who have the proper authority.³

This companionship can continue to be ours if we are worthy. We are told that “the Spirit of the Lord doth not dwell in

unholy temples”⁴ and that as we “let virtue garnish [our] thoughts unceasingly; then . . . the Holy Ghost shall be [our] constant companion.”⁵

The scriptures and the prophets teach what this constant companionship feels like. The Lord tells us, “I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart.”⁶ Enos stated, “While I was . . . struggling in the spirit, behold, the voice of the Lord came into my mind.”⁷ Joseph Smith said, “When you feel pure intelligence flowing into you, it may give you sudden strokes of ideas.”⁸ President Henry B. Eyring described the influence of the Holy Ghost as “peace, hope, and joy.” He added, “Almost always I have also felt a sensation of light.”⁹

My favorite description, though, comes from an eight-year-old boy who had just received the Holy Ghost. He said, “It felt like sunshine.”

Share personal testimony

However, it is not always easy to discern these “sunshine” moments at first. The Book of Mormon tells us of some faithful Lamanites who “were baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and they knew it not.”¹⁰

We can help others become more familiar with the promptings of the Spirit when we share our testimony of the influence of the Holy Ghost in our lives. Remember that some experiences are too sacred to relate. However, by sharing testimony of the Spirit in our lives, those who are unfamiliar with these promptings are more likely to recognize when they have similar feelings.

I was the first member of my family to join the Church. As an eight-year-old, I waited to feel somehow different because of my baptism. To be honest, the only thing I felt when I was brought out of the water was . . . well, dripping wet. I thought something more profound would

happen when I was confirmed. However, after receiving the Holy Ghost, again I felt happy but certainly no different than I had just a few minutes before.

It wasn’t until the following day at fast and testimony meeting that I experienced what I now recognize as the influence of the Holy Ghost. A brother stood to bear his testimony and tell about the blessings of his membership in the Church. I felt a flood of warmth sweep over me. Even as an eight-year-old, I recognized that this was something different. I felt a peace descend on me, and I had the distinct feeling that Heavenly Father was pleased with me.

Provide an environment where the Spirit can be felt

There are places where it is easier to feel the Spirit. Testimony meetings and general conference are some of those places. Certainly temples are another. The challenge for each of us is in providing an environment where the Spirit can be felt daily in our homes and weekly at church.

One reason we are encouraged to pray and read the scriptures every single day is that both of these activities invite the Spirit into our homes and into the lives of our family members.

Because the Spirit is often described as a still, small voice,¹¹ it is also important to have a time of quiet in our lives as well. The Lord has counseled us to “be still, and know that I am God.”¹² If we provide a still and quiet time each day when we are not bombarded by television, computer, video games, or personal electronic devices, we allow that still, small voice an opportunity to provide personal revelation and to whisper sweet guidance, reassurance, and comfort to us.

Similarly, we can provide an environment at church that allows the Spirit to give divine confirmation to what is being taught. Teachers and leaders do more

than teach lessons or conduct meetings. They facilitate the whisperings of the Spirit to each member. Elder Richard G. Scott has said, "If you accomplish nothing else in your relationship with your students than to help them recognize and follow the promptings of the Spirit, you will bless their lives immeasurably and eternally."¹³

A Sunbeam teacher wrapped each of her class members one by one in a blanket to teach them how the Spirit feels like the comfort and security of that covering. A visiting mother also heard the lesson.

Many months later the mother thanked the teacher. She told how she had been less active when she accompanied her young daughter to Primary. Several weeks after the lesson, the mother suffered a miscarriage. She was overcome with grief, when suddenly she felt a great warmth and peace. It felt like someone had covered her with a warm blanket. She recognized the reassurance of the Spirit and knew that Heavenly Father was aware of her and that He loved her.

Blessings of the Spirit

When we come to understand the whisperings of the Spirit, we will be able to hear Him teach us "the peaceable things of the kingdom"¹⁴ and "all things what [we] should do."¹⁵ We will recognize answers to our prayers and know how to live the gospel more fully each day. We will be guided and protected. And we can cultivate this gift in our lives as we follow those spiritual promptings. Most importantly, we will feel Him witness to us of the Father and of the Son.¹⁶

As a young woman attending youth conference, I felt the Spirit bear witness to me of the truthfulness of the restored gospel. In preparation for a testimony meeting, we sang "The Spirit of God." Now, I had sung that hymn many times

before in sacrament meetings. But on this occasion, from nearly the opening note, I felt the Spirit. By the time we sang, "The latter-day glory begins to come forth,"¹⁷ I knew that these were more than nice lyrics; they were beautiful truths.

The Holy Ghost has confirmed to me that God the Father lives. He loves each of us. He knows us individually and personally. He hears the pleadings of our hearts, and He answers those sincere prayers.

Jesus Christ is our Savior and Redeemer. He came to earth in the meridian of time to atone for our sins. And He will come again. These and all other aspects of the gospel that make up my testimony are firm in my heart because of the influence of the Holy Ghost. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 68:25.
2. Moroni 7:16.
3. See *True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* (2004), 83.
4. Helaman 4:24.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 121:45–46.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 8:2.
7. Enos 1:10.
8. Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 3:381.
9. Henry B. Eyring, "Gifts of the Spirit for Hard Times," *Ensign*, June 2007, 18.
10. 3 Nephi 9:20.
11. See 1 Kings 19:12; 1 Nephi 17:45; Doctrine and Covenants 85:6.
12. Psalm 46:10; see also Doctrine and Covenants 101:16.
13. Richard G. Scott, "Helping Others to Be Spiritually Led" (address to religious educators, Aug. 11, 1998), 3; in *Teaching, No Greater Call* (1999), 48.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 36:2.
15. See 2 Nephi 32:1–5.
16. See 2 Nephi 31:18.
17. "The Spirit of God," *Hymns*, no. 2.

Elder L. Whitney Clayton

Each of us has burdens

Many years ago I walked at dawn through the narrow cobblestone streets of Cusco, Peru, high in the Andes Mountains. I saw a man from a local indigenous group walking down one of the streets. He was not a big man physically, but he carried an immense load of firewood in a huge burlap sack on his back. The sack seemed to be as big as he was. The load must have weighed as much as he did. He steadied it with a rope that looped under the bottom of the sack and circled up around his forehead. He gripped the rope tightly on both sides of his head. He kept a rag on his forehead underneath the rope to keep it from cutting into his skin. He leaned forward under his burden and walked with deliberate, difficult steps.

The man was carrying the firewood to the marketplace, where it would be sold. In an average day he might make just two or three round-trips across the town to deliver similarly awkward, heavy loads.

The memory of him bent forward, struggling down the street has become increasingly meaningful for me with the passage of years. How long could he continue to carry such burdens?

Life presses all kinds of burdens on each of us, some light but others relentless and heavy. People struggle every day under burdens that tax their souls. Many of *us* struggle under such burdens. They can be emotionally or physically ponderous. They can be worrisome, oppressive, and exhausting. And they can continue for years.

Sources of our burdens

In a general sense, our burdens come from three sources. Some burdens are the natural product of the conditions of the world in which we live. Illness, physical disability, hurricanes, and earthquakes

come from time to time through no fault of our own. We can prepare for these risks and sometimes we can predict them, but in the natural pattern of life we will all confront some of these challenges.

Other burdens are imposed on us by the misconduct of others. Abuse and addictions can make home anything but a heaven on earth for innocent family members. Sin, incorrect traditions, repression, and crime scatter burdened victims along the pathways of life. Even less-serious misdeeds such as gossip and unkindness can cause others genuine suffering.

Our own mistakes and shortcomings produce many of our problems and can place heavy burdens on our own shoulders. The most onerous burden we impose upon ourselves is the burden of sin. We have all known the remorse and pain which inevitably follow our failure to keep the commandments.

No matter the burdens we face in life as a consequence of natural conditions, the misconduct of others, or our own mistakes and shortcomings, we are all children of a loving Heavenly Father, who sent us to earth as part of His eternal plan for our growth and progress. Our unique, individual experiences can help us prepare to return to Him. The adversity and afflictions that are ours, however difficult to bear, last, from heaven's perspective, for "but a small moment; and then, if [we] endure it well, God shall exalt [us] on high."¹ We must do everything we can to bear our burdens "well" for however long our "small moment" carrying them lasts.

Opportunities and blessings

Burdens provide opportunities to practice virtues that contribute to eventual perfection. They invite us to yield "to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and [put] off the natural man and [become] a

saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and [become] as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon [us], even as a child doth submit to his father.”² Thus burdens become blessings, though often such blessings are well disguised and may require time, effort, and faith to accept and understand. Four examples may help explain this:

- First, Adam was told, “Cursed shall be the ground for thy sake,” which meant for his benefit, and “by the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.”³ Work is a continual burden, but it is also a continual blessing “for [our] sake,” for it teaches lessons we can learn only “by the sweat of [our] face.”
- Second, Alma observed that the poverty and “afflictions [of the poor among the Zoramites] had truly humbled them, and that they were in a preparation to hear the word.”⁴ He added, “Because ye are compelled to be humble blessed are ye.”⁵ Our economic challenges may help prepare us to hear the word of the Lord.
- Third, because of the “exceedingly great length of [their] war,” many Nephites and Lamanites “were softened because of their afflictions, insomuch that they did humble themselves before God, even in the depth of humility.”⁶ Political unrest, social disorder, and, in some areas of the world, modern Gadianton robbers may humble us and motivate us to seek heavenly shelter from societal storms.
- Fourth, Joseph Smith was told that the terrible things he suffered for years at the hands of his enemies would “give [him] experience, and . . . be for [his] good.”⁷ The suffering we experience through the offenses of others is a valuable, though painful, school for improving our own behavior.

Bearing one another’s burdens

Further, bearing up under our own burdens can help us develop a reservoir of empathy for the problems others face. The Apostle Paul taught that we should “bear . . . one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.”⁸ Accordingly, our baptismal covenants require that we should be “willing to bear one another’s burdens, that they may be light; yea, and [be] willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort.”⁹

Keeping our baptismal covenants helps relieve our *own* burdens as well as those of burdened souls we serve.¹⁰ Those who offer such assistance to others stand on holy ground. In explaining this, the Savior taught:

“When saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

“When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

“Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

“And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”¹¹

The Savior offers us help

Through it all, the Savior offers us sustaining strength and support, and in His own time and way, He offers deliverance. When Alma and his followers escaped from the armies of King Noah, they established a community named Helam. They began to till the ground, build buildings, and prosper.¹² Without warning, an army of the Lamanites brought them into bondage, and “none could deliver them but the Lord their God.”¹³ That deliverance, however, did not come immediately.

Their enemies began to “put tasks upon them, and put taskmasters over them.”¹⁴ Although they were threatened with death

for praying,¹⁵ Alma and his people “did pour out their hearts to [God]; and he did know the thoughts of their hearts.”¹⁶ Because of their goodness and their obedience to their baptismal covenants,¹⁷ they were delivered in stages. The Lord said to them:

“I will . . . ease the burdens which are put upon your shoulders, that . . . you cannot feel them upon your backs, even while you are in bondage; and this will I do that ye may stand as witnesses for me hereafter, and that ye may know of a surety that I, the Lord God, do visit my people in their afflictions.

“And now it came to pass that the burdens which were laid upon Alma and his brethren were made light; yea, the Lord did strengthen them that they could bear up their burdens with ease, and they did submit cheerfully and with patience to all the will of the Lord.

“And it came to pass that so great was their faith and their patience that the voice of the Lord came unto them again, saying: Be of good comfort, for on the morrow I will deliver you out of bondage.”¹⁸

Mercifully, the Son of God offers us deliverance from the bondage of our sins, which are among the heaviest of all the burdens we bear. During His Atonement He suffered “according to the flesh that he might take upon him the sins of his people, that he might blot out their transgressions according to the power of his deliverance.”¹⁹ Christ “suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent.”²⁰ When we repent and keep the commandments, forgiveness and relief from our burdened conscience come with the help that only the Savior offers, for “surely, whosoever repenteth shall find mercy.”²¹

I remember that man in Peru, hunched over and struggling to carry that enormous sack of firewood on his back. For me, he is an image of us all as we struggle with the burdens of life. I know that as we

keep the commandments of God and our covenants, He helps us with our burdens. He strengthens us. When we repent, He forgives us and blesses us with peace of conscience and joy.²² May we then submit cheerfully and with patience to all the will of the Lord, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 121:7–8.
2. Mosiah 3:19.
3. Moses 4:23, 25.
4. Alma 32:6.
5. Alma 32:13.
6. Alma 62:41.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 122:7.
8. Galatians 6:2.
9. Mosiah 18:8–9.
10. See Matthew 10:39; 11:28–30; Mosiah 2:22.
11. See Matthew 25:35–40.
12. See Mosiah 23:5, 19–20.
13. See Mosiah 23:23–26.
14. Mosiah 24:9.
15. See Mosiah 24:10–11.
16. Mosiah 24:12.
17. See Mosiah 18:8–10; 24:13.
18. Mosiah 24:14–16.
19. Alma 7:13.
20. Doctrine and Covenants 19:16.
21. Alma 32:13.
22. See Mosiah 4:3; Alma 36:19–21.

President Eyring

The choir and the congregation will now join in singing “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet.” At the conclusion of the singing, Brother Russell T. Osguthorpe, Sunday School general president, will address us, after which we shall hear from Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The choir will then sing “My Heavenly Father Loves Me.”

The choir and congregation sang “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet.”

Russell T. Osguthorpe

Saving lives

One day while serving as a mission president, I was talking on the phone to our oldest son. He was on his way to the hospital where he worked as a physician. When he arrived at the hospital, he said, “Nice talking to you, Dad, but now I’ve got to get out of my car and go save some lives.”

Our son treats children with life-threatening illnesses. When he is able to diagnose a disease properly and give the right treatment, he can save a child’s life. I told our missionaries that their work is also to help save lives—the spiritual lives of those they teach.

President Joseph F. Smith said: “When [we receive] the truth [we] will be saved by it. [We] will not be saved merely because someone taught it to [us], but because [we] received and acted upon it” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1902, 86; see also *Teaching, No Greater Call* [1999], 49; 1 Timothy 4:16).

Elements of effective teaching

Our son saves lives by sharing his knowledge of medicine; missionaries and teachers in the Church help save lives by sharing their knowledge of the gospel. When missionaries and teachers draw upon the Spirit, they teach the appropriate principle, invite their learners to live that principle, and bear witness of the promised blessings that will certainly follow. Elder David A. Bednar shared these three simple elements of effective teaching in a recent training meeting: (1) key doctrine, (2) invitation to action, and (3) promised blessings.

The guide *Preach My Gospel* helps missionaries teach key doctrine and invite those they teach to take action and receive promised blessings. The guide *Teaching,*

No Greater Call helps parents and teachers do the same. It is to gospel teaching what *Preach My Gospel* is to missionary work. We use them to prepare to teach, and then we draw upon the Spirit as we teach.

President Thomas S. Monson tells of a Sunday School teacher from his youth, Lucy Gertsch. One Sunday, partway through a lesson about selfless service, Sister Gertsch invited her students to give their class party fund to the family of one of their classmates whose mother had passed away. President Monson said that in giving that invitation to action, Sister Gertsch had “closed the manual and opened our eyes and our ears and our hearts to the glory of God” (“Examples of Great Teachers” [worldwide leadership training meeting, Feb. 10, 2007], *Ensign*, June 2007, 108). Sister Gertsch had clearly used the manual to prepare her lesson, but when inspiration came, she closed the manual and invited her students to live the gospel principle she was teaching.

As President Monson has taught: “The goal of gospel teaching . . . is not to ‘pour information’ into the minds of class members. . . . *The aim is to inspire the individual to think about, feel about, and then do something about living gospel principles*” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1970, 107; italics in original).

When Moroni appeared to the Prophet Joseph, he not only taught him key doctrines of the Restoration, but he also told him that “God had a work for [him] to do” and promised him that his name would be known throughout the world (see Joseph Smith—History 1:33). All parents and gospel teachers are messengers from God. Not all of us teach future prophets, as did Sister Gertsch and Moroni, but we are all teaching future leaders of the Church. So we teach key doctrine, invite learners to do the work God has for them, and then promise that blessings will surely come.

Examples of inspiring teachers

I remember as a young boy feeling carefree as I walked to the church for a Primary meeting. When I arrived, I was surprised to see all of the parents there for a special program. Then it hit me. I had a part in this program, and I had forgotten to memorize my lines. When my turn came to say my part, I stood in front of my chair, but not one word came from my mouth. I could remember nothing. So I just stood there and then finally sat down and stared at the floor.

After that experience, I made a firm resolve never to speak in any Church meeting again. And I held to that resolve for some time. Then one Sunday, Sister Lydia Stillman, a Primary leader, knelt down at my side and asked me to give a short talk the following week. I said, “I don’t give talks.” She responded, “I know, but you can give this one because I’ll help you.” I continued to resist, but she expressed so much confidence in me that her invitation was hard to refuse. I gave the talk.

That good woman was a messenger from God, who had a work for me to do. She taught me that when a call comes, you accept it, no matter how inadequate you might feel. As Moroni did with Joseph, she made certain that I was prepared when the time came to give that talk. That inspired teacher helped save my life.

When I was in my teens, a recently returned missionary named Brother Peterson taught our Sunday School class. Every week he would draw a large arrow from the lower left-hand corner of the blackboard pointing to the upper right-hand corner. Then he would write at the top of the blackboard, “Aim High.”

Whatever doctrine he was teaching, he would ask us to stretch ourselves, to reach a little higher than we thought was possible. The arrow and those two words, *aim high*, were a constant invitation throughout the lesson. Brother Peterson made me want to serve a good mission, to do better

in school, to set my sights higher for my career.

Brother Peterson had a work for us to do. His goal was to help us “think about, feel about, and then do something about living gospel principles.” His teaching helped save my life.

Experience learning mission languages

At the age of 19, I was called to serve a mission in Tahiti, where I had to learn two foreign languages—French and Tahitian. Early in my mission, I became very discouraged at my lack of progress in either language. Every time I tried to speak French, people responded in Tahitian. When I tried to speak Tahitian, they answered in French. I was on the verge of giving up.

Then one day, as I was walking past the laundry room at the mission home, I heard a voice calling me. I turned around and saw a gray-haired Tahitian woman standing in the doorway motioning for me to come back. Her name was Tuputeata Moo. She spoke only Tahitian. And I spoke only English. I missed much of what she was trying to tell me, but I did understand that she wanted me to return to the laundry room every day so she could help me learn Tahitian.

I stopped by daily to practice with her while she ironed clothes. At first I wondered if our meetings would be of any help, but gradually I began to understand her. Each time we met, she communicated to me her complete confidence that I could learn both languages.

Sister Moo helped me learn Tahitian. But she helped me learn much more than that. She was really teaching me the first principle of the gospel—faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. She taught me that if I relied on the Lord, He would help me do something I thought was impossible. She not only helped save my mission—she helped save my life.

Evaluating our teaching

Sister Stillman, Brother Peterson, and Sister Moo taught “by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; by kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul” (D&C 121:41–42). They taught with virtue garnishing their thoughts, and because of that, the Holy Ghost was their constant companion (see D&C 121:45–46).

These great teachers have inspired me to ask questions about my own teaching:

1. As a teacher, do I view myself as a messenger from God?
2. Do I prepare and then teach in ways that can help save lives?
3. Do I focus on a key doctrine of the Restoration?
4. Can those I teach feel the love I have for them and for my Heavenly Father and the Savior?
5. When inspiration comes, do I close the manual and open their eyes and their ears and their hearts to the glory of God?
6. Do I invite them to do the work that God has for them to do?
7. Do I express so much confidence in them that they find the invitation hard to refuse?
8. Do I help them recognize promised blessings that come from living the doctrine I am teaching?

Learning and teaching are not optional activities in the kingdom of God. They are the very means by which the gospel has been restored to the earth and by which we will gain eternal life. They provide the pathway to personal testimony. No one can be “saved in ignorance” (D&C 131:6).

I know that God lives. I testify that Jesus is the Christ. I bear witness that the Prophet Joseph opened this dispensation by learning truth and then teaching it. Joseph asked one question after another, received divine answers, and then taught what he had learned to God’s children. I know that President Monson is the Lord’s mouthpiece on the earth today and that he continues to learn and to teach us as Joseph did because teaching helps save lives. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder David A. Bednar

“More diligent and concerned at home”

In 1833 the Prophet Joseph Smith received a revelation that contained a strong rebuke to several leading brethren of the Church to set their families in order (see D&C 93:40–50). A specific phrase from this revelation provides the theme for my message—“more diligent and concerned at home” (verse 50). I want to suggest three ways each of us can become more diligent and concerned in our homes. I invite you to listen both with ears that hear and with hearts that feel, and I pray for the Spirit of the Lord to be with all of us.

Expressing and showing love

Suggestion number one: Express love—and show it. We can begin to become more diligent and concerned at home by telling the people we love that we love them. Such expressions do not need to be flowery or lengthy. We simply should sincerely and frequently express love.

Brethren and sisters, when was the last time you took your eternal companion in your arms and said, “I love you”? Parents, when was the last time you sincerely expressed love to your children? Children, when was the last time you told your parents that you love them?

Each of us already knows we should tell the people we love that we love them. But what we know is not always reflected in what we do. We may feel unsure, awkward, or even perhaps a bit embarrassed.

As disciples of the Savior, we are not merely striving to know more; rather, we need to consistently do more of what we know is right and become better.

We should remember that saying “I love you” is only a beginning. We need to say it, we need to mean it, and most importantly we need consistently to show it. We need to both express and demonstrate love.

President Thomas S. Monson recently counseled: “Often we assume that [the people around us] *must* know how much we love them. But we should never assume; we should let them know. . . . We will never regret the kind words spoken or the affection shown. Rather, our regrets will come if such things are omitted from our relationships with those who mean the most to us” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2008, 85–86; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 86; italics in original).

Sometimes in a sacrament meeting talk or testimony, we hear a statement like this: “I know I do not tell my spouse often enough how much I love her. Today I want her, my children, and all of you to know that I love her.”

Such an expression of love may be appropriate. But when I hear a statement like this, I squirm and silently exclaim that the spouse and children should not be hearing this apparently rare and private communication in public at church! Hopefully the children hear love expressed and see love demonstrated between their parents in the regular routine of daily living. If, however, the public statement of love at church is a bit surprising to the spouse or the children, then indeed there is a need to be more diligent and concerned at home.

The relationship between love and appropriate action is demonstrated repeatedly in the scriptures and is highlighted

by the Savior’s instruction to His Apostles: “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). Just as our love of and for the Lord is evidenced by walking ever in His ways (see Deuteronomy 19:9), so our love for spouse, parents, and children is reflected most powerfully in our thoughts, our words, and our deeds (see Mosiah 4:30).

Feeling the security and constancy of love from a spouse, a parent, or a child is a rich blessing. Such love nurtures and sustains faith in God. Such love is a source of strength and casts out fear (see 1 John 4:18). Such love is the desire of every human soul.

We can become more diligent and concerned at home as we express love—and consistently show it.

Declaring and living our testimonies

Suggestion number two: Bear testimony—and live it. We also can become more diligent and concerned at home by bearing testimony to those whom we love about the things we know to be true by the witness of the Holy Ghost. The bearing of testimony need not be lengthy or eloquent. And we do not need to wait until the first Sunday of the month to declare our witness of things that are true. Within the walls of our own homes, we can and should bear pure testimony of the divinity and reality of the Father and the Son, of the great plan of happiness, and of the Restoration.

Brethren and sisters, when was the last time you bore testimony to your eternal companion? Parents, when was the last time you declared your witness to your children about the things you know to be true? And children, when was the last time you shared your testimony with your parents and family?

Each of us already knows we should bear testimony to the people we love the most. But what we know is not always reflected in what we do. We may feel

unsure, awkward, or even perhaps a bit embarrassed.

As disciples of the Savior, we are not merely striving to know more; rather, we need to consistently do more of what we know is right and become better.

We should remember that bearing a heartfelt testimony is only a beginning. We need to bear testimony, we need to mean it, and most importantly we need consistently to live it. We need to both declare and live our testimonies.

The relationship between testimony and appropriate action is emphasized in the Savior's instruction to the Saints in Kirtland: "That which the Spirit testifies unto you even so I would that ye should do" (D&C 46:7). Our testimony of gospel truth should be reflected both in our words and in our deeds. And our testimonies are proclaimed and lived most powerfully in our own homes. Spouses, parents, and children should strive to overcome any hesitancy, reluctance, or embarrassment about bearing testimony. We should both create and look for opportunities to bear testimony of gospel truths—and live them.

A testimony is what we know to be true in our minds and in our hearts by the witness of the Holy Ghost (see D&C 8:2). As we profess truth rather than admonish, exhort, or simply share interesting experiences, we invite the Holy Ghost to confirm the verity of our words. The power of pure testimony (see Alma 4:19) does not come from sophisticated language or effective presentation; rather, it is the result of revelation conveyed by the third member of the Godhead, even the Holy Ghost.

Feeling the power, the edification, and the constancy of testimony from a spouse, a parent, or a child is a rich blessing. Such testimony fortifies faith and provides direction. Such testimony generates light in a world that grows increasingly dark. Such testimony is the source of an eternal perspective and of enduring peace.

We can become more diligent and concerned at home as we bear testimony—and consistently live it.

Consistency

Suggestion number three: Be consistent. As our sons were growing up, our family did what you have done and what you now do. We had regular family prayer, scripture study, and family home evening. Now, I am sure what I am about to describe has never occurred in your home, but it did in ours.

Sometimes Sister Bednar and I wondered if our efforts to do these spiritually essential things were worthwhile. Now and then verses of scripture were read amid outbursts such as "He's touching me!" "Make him stop looking at me!" "Mom, he's breathing my air!" Sincere prayers occasionally were interrupted with giggling and poking. And with active, rambunctious boys, family home evening lessons did not always produce high levels of edification. At times Sister Bednar and I were exasperated because the righteous habits we worked so hard to foster did not seem to yield immediately the spiritual results we wanted and expected.

Today if you could ask our adult sons what they remember about family prayer, scripture study, and family home evening, I believe I know how they would answer. They likely would not identify a particular prayer or a specific instance of scripture study or an especially meaningful family home evening lesson as the defining moment in their spiritual development. What they would say they remember is that as a family we were consistent.

Sister Bednar and I thought helping our sons understand the content of a particular lesson or a specific scripture was the ultimate outcome. But such a result does not occur each time we study or pray or learn together. The consistency of our intent and work was perhaps the greatest lesson—a

lesson we did not fully appreciate at the time.

In my office is a beautiful painting of a wheat field. The painting is a vast collection of individual brushstrokes—none of which in isolation is very interesting or impressive. In fact, if you stand close to the canvas, all you can see is a mass of seemingly unrelated and unattractive streaks of yellow and gold and brown paint. However, as you gradually move away from the canvas, all of the individual brushstrokes combine together and produce a magnificent landscape of a wheat field. Many ordinary, individual brushstrokes work together to create a captivating and beautiful painting.

Each family prayer, each episode of family scripture study, and each family home evening is a brushstroke on the canvas of our souls. No one event may appear to be very impressive or memorable. But just as the yellow and gold and brown strokes of paint complement each other and produce an impressive masterpiece, so our consistency in doing seemingly small things can lead to significant spiritual results. “Wherefore, be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great” (D&C 64:33). Consistency is a key principle as we lay the foundation of a great work in our individual lives and as we become more diligent and concerned in our own homes.

Being consistent in our homes is important for another reason. Many of the Savior’s harshest rebukes were directed to hypocrites. Jesus warned His disciples concerning the scribes and Pharisees: “Do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not” (Matthew 23:3). This strong admonition is sobering, given the counsel to “express love—and show it,” to “bear testimony—and live it,” and to “be consistent.”

The hypocrisy in our lives is most readily discerned and causes the greatest

destruction within our own homes. And children often are the most alert and sensitive when it comes to recognizing hypocrisy.

A public statement of love when the private actions of love are absent at home is hypocrisy—and weakens the foundation of a great work. Publicly declaring testimony when faithfulness and obedience are missing within our own homes is hypocrisy—and undermines the foundation of a great work. The commandment “Thou shalt not bear false witness” (Exodus 20:16) applies most pointedly to the hypocrite in each of us. We need to be and become more consistent. “But be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Timothy 4:12).

As we seek the Lord’s help and in His strength, we can gradually reduce the disparity between what we say and what we do, between expressing love and consistently showing it, and between bearing testimony and steadfastly living it. We can become more diligent and concerned at home as we are more faithful in learning, living, and loving the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

Testimony

“Marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and . . . the family is central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102). For these and other eternally important reasons, we should be more diligent and concerned at home.

May every spouse, every child, and every parent be blessed to communicate and receive love, to bear and be edified by strong testimony, and to become more consistent in the seemingly small things that matter so much.

In these important pursuits we will never be left alone. Our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son live. They love us and know our circumstances, and They

will help us to become more diligent and concerned at home. Of these truths I testify in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang “My Heavenly Father Loves Me.”

President Eyring

We are grateful to the Tabernacle Choir and their conductors and organists for the beautiful music they have provided this

morning. The choir will now sing “Oh, May My Soul Commune with Thee.”

Our concluding speaker at this session will be President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Following President Uchtdorf’s remarks, the choir will sing “Come, Come, Ye Saints.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Clate W. Mask Jr. of the Seventy, and conference will be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

The choir sang “Oh, May My Soul Commune with Thee.”

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf

What we are known for

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is continually growing and becoming better known throughout the world. Although there will always be those who stereotype the Church and its members in a negative way, most people think of us as honest, helpful, and hard-working. Some have images of clean-cut missionaries, loving families, and friendly neighbors who don’t smoke or drink. We might also be known as a people who attend church every Sunday for three hours, in a place where everyone is a brother or a sister, where the children sing songs about streams that talk, trees that produce popcorn, and children who want to become sunbeams.

Brothers and sisters, of all the things *we* want to be known for, are there attributes above all others that should define us as members of His Church, even as disciples of Jesus Christ? Since our last general conference six months ago, I have pondered this and similar questions. Today I would like to share with you some thoughts and impressions that have come as a result of that inquiry.

Becoming true disciples

The first question is: *How do we become true disciples of Jesus Christ?* The Savior Himself provided the answer with this profound declaration: “If ye love me, keep my commandments.”¹ This is the essence of what it means to be a true disciple: those who receive Christ Jesus walk with Him.²

But this may present a problem for some because there are so many “shoulds” and “should nots” that merely keeping track of them can be a challenge. Sometimes, well-meaning amplifications of divine principles—many coming from uninspired sources—complicate matters further, diluting the purity of divine truth with man-made addenda. One person’s good idea—something that may work for him or her—takes root and becomes an expectation. And gradually, eternal principles can get lost within the labyrinth of “good ideas.”

This was one of the Savior’s criticisms of the religious “experts” of His day, whom He chastised for attending to the hundreds of minor details of the law while neglecting the weightier matters.³

Love, the great commandment

So how do we stay aligned with these weightier matters? Is there a constant compass that can help us prioritize our lives, thoughts, and actions?

Once again the Savior revealed the way. When asked to name the greatest commandment, He did not hesitate. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind,” He said. “This is the first and great commandment.”⁴ Coupled with the second great commandment—to love our neighbor as ourselves⁵—we have a compass that provides direction not only for our lives but also for the Lord’s Church on both sides of the veil.

Because love is the great commandment, it ought to be at the *center* of all and everything we do in our own family, in our Church callings, and in our livelihood. Love is the healing balm that repairs rifts in personal and family relationships. It is the bond that unites families, communities, and nations. Love is the power that initiates friendship, tolerance, civility, and respect. It is the source that overcomes divisiveness and hate. Love is the fire that warms our lives with unparalleled joy and divine hope. Love should be our walk and our talk.

When we truly understand what it means to love as Jesus Christ loves us, the confusion clears and our priorities align. Our walk as disciples of Christ becomes more joyful. Our lives take on new meaning. Our relationship with our Heavenly Father becomes more profound. Obedience becomes a joy rather than a burden.

Our need to love God

Why should we love God? God the Eternal Father did not give that first great commandment because He needs us to love Him. His power and glory are not diminished should we disregard, deny, or even defile His name. His influence and

dominion extend through time and space independent of our acceptance, approval, or admiration.

No, God does not need us to love Him. But oh, how we need to love God!

For what we love determines what we seek.

What we seek determines what we think and do.

What we think and do determines who we are—and who we will become.

We are created in the image of our heavenly parents; we are God’s spirit children. Therefore, we have a vast capacity for love—it is part of our spiritual heritage. What and how we love not only defines us as individuals; it also defines us as a church. Love is the defining characteristic of a disciple of Christ.

Since the beginning of time, love has been the source of both the highest bliss and the heaviest burdens. At the heart of misery from the days of Adam until today, you will find the love of wrong things. And at the heart of joy, you will find the love of good things.

And the greatest of all good things is God.

Our Father in Heaven has given us, His children, much more than any mortal mind can comprehend. Under His direction the Great Jehovah created this wondrous world we live in. God the Father watches over us, fills our hearts with breathtaking joy, brightens our darkest hours with blessed peace, distills upon our minds precious truths, shepherds us through times of distress, rejoices when we rejoice, and answers our righteous petitions.

He offers to His children the promise of a glorious and infinite existence and has provided a way for us to progress in knowledge and glory until we receive a fulness of joy. He has promised us all that He has.

If all that is not enough reason to love our Heavenly Father, perhaps we can learn from the words of the Apostle John, who said, “We love him, because he first loved us.”⁶

God's love for us

Why does Heavenly Father love us? Think of the purest, most all-consuming love you can imagine. Now multiply that love by an infinite amount—that is the measure of God's love for you.⁷

God does not look on the outward appearance.⁸ I believe that He doesn't care one bit if we live in a castle or a cottage, if we are handsome or homely, if we are famous or forgotten. Though we are incomplete, God loves us completely. Though we are imperfect, He loves us perfectly. Though we may feel lost and without compass, God's love encompasses us completely.

He loves us because He is filled with an infinite measure of holy, pure, and indescribable love. We are important to God not because of our résumé but because we are His children. He loves every one of us, even those who are flawed, rejected, awkward, sorrowful, or broken. God's love is so great that He loves even the proud, the selfish, the arrogant, and the wicked.

What this means is that, regardless of our current state, there is hope for us. No matter our distress, no matter our sorrow, no matter our mistakes, our infinitely compassionate Heavenly Father desires that we draw near to Him so that He can draw near to us.⁹

Increasing our love of God

How can we increase our love of God? Since "God is love,"¹⁰ the closer we approach Him, the more profoundly we experience love.¹¹ But because a veil separates this mortality from our heavenly home, we must seek in the Spirit that which is imperceptible to mortal eyes.

Heaven may seem distant at times, but the scriptures offer hope: "Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart."¹²

However, seeking God with all our hearts implies much more than simply

offering a prayer or pronouncing a few words inviting God into our lives. "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments."¹³ We can make a great production of saying that we know God. We can proclaim publicly that we love Him. Nevertheless, if we don't obey Him, all is in vain, for "he that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."¹⁴

We increase our love for our Heavenly Father and demonstrate that love by aligning our thoughts and actions with God's word. His pure love directs and encourages us to become more pure and holy. It inspires us to walk in righteousness—not out of fear or obligation but out of an earnest desire to become even more like Him because we love Him. By doing so, we can become "born again . . . [and] cleansed by blood, even the blood of [the] Only Begotten; that [we] might be sanctified from all sin, and enjoy the words of eternal life in this world, and eternal life in the world to come, even immortal glory."¹⁵

My dear brothers and sisters, don't get discouraged if you stumble at times. Don't feel downcast or despair if you don't feel worthy to be a disciple of Christ at all times. The first step to walking in righteousness is simply to try. We must *try* to believe. Try to learn of God: read the scriptures; study the words of His latter-day prophets; choose to listen to the Father; and do the things He asks of us. Try and keep on trying until that which seems difficult becomes possible—and that which seems only possible becomes habit and a real part of you.

Listening for the Father's voice

How can we hear the Father's voice? As you reach out to your Heavenly Father, as you pray to Him in the name of Christ, He will answer you. He speaks to us everywhere.

As you read God's word recorded in the scriptures, listen for His voice.

During this general conference and later as you study the words spoken here, listen for His voice.

As you visit the temple and attend Church meetings, listen for His voice.

Listen for the voice of the Father in the bounties and beauties of nature, in the gentle whisperings of the Spirit.

In your daily interactions with others, in the words of a hymn, in the laughter of a child, listen for His voice.

If you listen for the voice of the Father, He will lead you on a course that will allow you to experience the pure love of Christ.

As we draw near to Heavenly Father, we become more holy. And as we become more holy, we will overcome disbelief and our souls will be filled with His blessed light. As we align our lives with this supernal light, it leads us out of darkness and toward greater light. This greater light leads to the unspeakable ministrings of the Holy Spirit, and the veil between heaven and earth can become thin.

Love is the way of the disciple

Why is love the great commandment? Heavenly Father's love for His children is the core message of the plan of happiness, which plan is made active through the Atonement of Jesus Christ—the greatest expression of love the world has ever known.¹⁶

How clearly the Savior spoke when He said that every other commandment hangs upon the principle of love.¹⁷ If we do not neglect the great laws—if we truly learn to love our Heavenly Father and our fellowman with all our heart, soul, and mind—all else will fall into place.

The divine love of God turns ordinary acts into extraordinary service. Divine love is the motive that transports simple words into sacred scripture. Divine love is the factor that transforms reluctant compliance with God's commandments into blessed dedication and consecration.

Love is the guiding light that illuminates the disciple's path and fills our daily walk with life, meaning, and wonder.

Love is the measure of our faith, the inspiration for our obedience, and the true altitude of our discipleship.

Love is the way of the disciple.

I testify that God is in His heaven. He lives. He knows and loves you. He is mindful of you. He hears your prayers and knows the desires of your heart. He is filled with infinite love for you.

Let me conclude as I began, my dear brothers and sisters: what attribute should define us as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints?

Let us be known as a people who love God with all our heart, soul, and mind and who love our neighbor as ourselves. When we understand and practice these two great commandments in our families, in our wards and branches, in our nations, and in our daily lives, we will begin to understand what it means to be a true disciple of Jesus the Christ. Of this I testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. John 14:15.
2. See Colossians 2:6.
3. See Matthew 23:23.
4. Matthew 22:37–38.
5. See Matthew 22:39.
6. 1 John 4:19.
7. See Isaiah 54:10; Jeremiah 31:3.
8. See 1 Samuel 16:7.
9. See Doctrine and Covenants 88:63.
10. 1 John 4:8.
11. See Romans 5:5; 1 John 4:7, 16.
12. Jeremiah 29:13.
13. 1 John 5:3; see also 2 John 1:6.
14. 1 John 2:4; see also Isaiah 29:13.
15. Moses 6:59.
16. See John 15:13.
17. See Matthew 22:36–40.

The choir sang “Come, Come, Ye Saints.”

Elder Clate W. Mask Jr. offered the benediction.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second session of the 179th Semi-annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, October 3, 2009. President Henry B. Eyring conducted this session.

Music was provided by a combined choir from stakes in Bountiful and Farmington, Utah. Michael Huff directed the choir, and Linda Margetts was the organist.

President Henry B. Eyring

Brothers and sisters, we welcome you this afternoon to the second session of the 179th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Thomas S. Monson, who presides at this conference, has asked that I conduct this session.

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of television, radio, or the Internet, and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be by a combined ward choir from stakes in Bountiful and Farmington, Utah, under the direction of Michael Huff, with Linda

Margetts at the organ. The choir will open these services by singing "Let Zion in Her Beauty Rise." The invocation will then be offered by Elder Carlos H. Amado of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Let Zion in Her Beauty Rise."

Elder Carlos H. Amado offered the invocation.

The choir sang "Know This, That Every Soul Is Free."

President Eyring

The choir just sang "Know This, That Every Soul Is Free."

President Monson has asked that I now present the General Authorities, Area Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for sustaining vote, after which we shall be pleased to hear from Elders Dallin H. Oaks and Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Following Elder Hales's remarks, Elder Jorge F. Zeballos of the Seventy will address us.

The Sustaining of Church Officers

President Henry B. Eyring

It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Henry Bennion Eyring as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and Dieter Friedrich Uchtdorf as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Those opposed, if any, may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Boyd Kenneth Packer as President of the Quorum

of the Twelve Apostles and the following as members of that quorum: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, David A. Bednar, Quentin L. Cook, D. Todd Christofferson, and Neil L. Andersen. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may so indicate.

It is proposed that we sustain the counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and

revelators. All in favor, please manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we release Elders Charles Didier, John M. Madsen, Lynn A. Mickelsen, and Dennis B. Neuenschwander as members of the First Quorum of the Seventy and designate them as emeritus General Authorities. It is also proposed that we release Elders Douglas L. Callister, Shirley D. Christensen, James M. Dunn, Daryl H. Garn, Clate W. Mask Jr., Robert C. Oaks, William W. Parmley, W. Douglas Shumway, and Robert S. Wood as members of the Second Quorum

of the Seventy. Those who wish to join us in expressing gratitude to these Brethren for their excellent service, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities, Area Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may manifest it.

President Monson, insofar as I have been able to observe, the voting in the Conference Center has been unanimous. Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your sustaining vote, your faith, devotion, and prayers.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

I have been impressed to speak about God's love and God's commandments. My message is that God's universal and perfect love is shown in all the blessings of His gospel plan, including the fact that His choicest blessings are reserved for those who obey His laws.¹ These are eternal principles that should guide parents in their love and teaching of their children.

Confusion between love and law

I begin with four examples which illustrate some mortal confusion between love and law.

- A young adult in a cohabitation relationship tells grieving parents, "If you really loved me, you would accept me and my partner just like you accept your married children."
- A youth reacts to parental commands or pressure by declaring, "If you really loved me, you wouldn't force me."

In these examples a person violating commandments asserts that parental love should override the commandments of divine law and the teachings of parents.

The next two examples show mortal confusion about the effect of God's love.

- A person rejects the doctrine that a couple must be married for eternity to enjoy family relationships in the next life, declaring, "If God really loved us, I can't believe He would separate husbands and wives in this way."
- Another person says his faith has been destroyed by the suffering God allows to be inflicted on a person or a race, concluding, "If there was a God who loved us, He wouldn't let this happen."

These persons disbelieve eternal laws which they consider contrary to their concept of the effect of God's love. Persons who take this position do not understand the nature of God's love or the purpose of His laws and commandments. The love of God does not supersede His laws and His commandments, and the effect of God's laws and commandments does not diminish the purpose and effect of His love. The same should be true of parental love and rules.

The love of God

First, consider the love of God, described so meaningfully this morning by President Dieter F. Uchtdorf. “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” the Apostle Paul asked. Not tribulation, not persecution, not peril or the sword (see Romans 8:35). “For I am persuaded,” he concluded, “that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, . . . nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God” (verses 38–39).

There is no greater evidence of the infinite power and perfection of God’s love than is recorded by the Apostle John: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son” (John 3:16). Another Apostle wrote that God “spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all” (Romans 8:32). Think how it must have grieved our Heavenly Father to send His Son to endure incomprehensible suffering for our sins. That is the greatest evidence of His love for each of us!

God’s love for His children is an eternal reality, but why does He love us so much, and why do we desire that love? The answer is found in the relationship between God’s love and His laws.

Some seem to value God’s love because of their hope that His love is so great and so unconditional that it will mercifully excuse them from obeying His laws. In contrast, those who understand God’s plan for His children know that God’s laws are invariable, which is another great evidence of His love for His children. Mercy cannot rob justice,² and those who obtain mercy are “they who have kept the covenant and observed the commandment” (D&C 54:6).

We read again and again in the Bible and in modern scriptures of God’s anger with the wicked³ and of His acting in His wrath⁴ against those who violate His laws. How are anger and wrath evidence

of His love? Joseph Smith taught that God “institute[d] laws whereby [the spirits that He would send into the world] could have a privilege to advance like himself.”⁵ God’s love is so perfect that He lovingly requires us to obey His commandments because He knows that only through obedience to His laws can we become perfect, as He is. For this reason, God’s anger and His wrath are not a *contradiction* of His love but an *evidence* of His love. Every parent knows that you can love a child totally and completely while still being creatively angry and disappointed at that child’s self-defeating behavior.

The love of God is so universal that His perfect plan bestows many gifts on all of His children, even those who disobey His laws. Mortality is one such gift, bestowed on all who qualified in the War in Heaven.⁶ Another unconditional gift is the universal resurrection: “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:22). Many other mortal gifts are not tied to our personal obedience to law. As Jesus taught, our Heavenly Father “maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matthew 5:45).

If only we will listen, we can know of God’s love and feel it, even when we are disobedient. A woman recently returned to Church activity gave this description in a sacrament meeting talk: “He has always been there for me, even when I rejected Him. He has always guided me and comforted me with His tender mercies all around me, but I [was] too angry to see and accept incidents and feelings as such.”⁷

God’s laws

God’s choicest blessings are clearly contingent upon obedience to God’s laws and commandments. The key teaching is from modern revelation:

“There is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated—

“And when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated” (D&C 130:20–21).

This great principle helps us understand the *why* of many things, like justice and mercy balanced by the Atonement. It also explains why God will not forestall the exercise of agency by His children. Agency—our power to choose—is fundamental to the gospel plan that brings us to earth. God does not intervene to forestall the consequences of some persons’ choices in order to protect the well-being of other persons—even when they kill, injure, or oppress one another—for this would destroy His plan for our eternal progress.⁸ He will bless us to endure the consequences of others’ choices, but He will not prevent those choices.⁹

If a person understands the teachings of Jesus, he or she cannot reasonably conclude that our loving Heavenly Father or His divine Son believes that Their love supersedes Their commandments. Consider these examples.

When Jesus began His ministry, His first message was repentance.¹⁰

When He exercised loving mercy by not condemning the woman taken in adultery, He nevertheless told her, “Go, and sin no more” (John 8:11).

Jesus taught, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21).

The effect of God’s commandments and laws is not changed to accommodate popular behavior or desires. If anyone thinks that godly or parental love for an individual grants the loved one license to disobey the law, he or she does not understand either love or law. The Lord declared: “That which breaketh a law, and

abideth not by law, but seeketh to become a law unto itself, and willesh to abide in sin, and altogether abideth in sin, cannot be sanctified by law, neither by mercy, justice, nor judgment. Therefore, they must remain filthy still” (D&C 88:35).

We read in modern revelation, “All kingdoms have a law given” (D&C 88:36). For example:

“He who is not able to abide the law of a celestial kingdom cannot abide a celestial glory.

“And he who cannot abide the law of a terrestrial kingdom cannot abide a terrestrial glory.

“And he who cannot abide the law of a telestial kingdom cannot abide a telestial glory” (D&C 88:22–24).

In other words, the kingdom of glory to which the Final Judgment assigns us is not determined by love but by the law that God has invoked in His plan to qualify us for eternal life, “the greatest of all the gifts of God” (D&C 14:7).

Parents’ application of principles

In teaching and reacting to their children, parents have many opportunities to apply these principles. One such opportunity has to do with the gifts parents bestow on their children. Just as God has bestowed some gifts on all of His mortal children without requiring their personal obedience to His laws, parents provide many benefits like housing and food even if their children are not in total harmony with all parental requirements. But, following the example of an all-wise and loving Heavenly Father who has given laws and commandments for the benefit of His children, wise parents condition some parental gifts on obedience.

If parents have a wayward child—such as a teenager indulging in alcohol or drugs—they face a serious question. Does parental love require that these substances or their consumption be allowed in the home, or do the requirements of civil law or the

seriousness of the conduct or the interests of other children in the home require that this be forbidden?

To pose an even more serious question, if an adult child is living in cohabitation, does the seriousness of sexual relations outside the bonds of marriage require that this child feel the full weight of family disapproval by being excluded from any family contacts, or does parental love require that the fact of cohabitation be ignored? I have seen both of these extremes, and I believe that both are inappropriate.

Where do parents draw the line? That is a matter for parental wisdom, guided by the inspiration of the Lord. There is no area of parental action that is more needful of heavenly guidance or more likely to receive it than the decisions of parents in raising their children and governing their families. This is the work of eternity.

As parents grapple with these problems, they should remember the Lord's teaching that we leave the ninety and nine and go out into the wilderness to rescue the lost sheep.¹¹ President Thomas S. Monson has called for a loving crusade to rescue our brothers and sisters who are wandering in the wilderness of apathy or ignorance.¹² These teachings require continued loving concern, which surely requires continued loving associations.

Parents should also remember the Lord's frequent teaching that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth" (Hebrews 12:6).¹³ In his conference talk on tolerance and love, Elder Russell M. Nelson taught that "real love for the sinner may compel courageous confrontation—not acquiescence! Real love does not support self-destructive behavior."¹⁴

Wherever the line is drawn between the power of love and the force of law, the breaking of commandments is certain to impact loving family relationships. Jesus taught:

"Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division:

"For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three.

"The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother" (Luke 12:51–53).

This sobering teaching reminds us that when family members are not united in striving to keep the commandments of God, there will be divisions. We do all that we can to avoid impairing loving relationships, but sometimes it happens after all we can do.

In the midst of such stress, we must endure the reality that the straying of our loved ones will detract from our happiness, but it should not detract from our love for one another or our patient efforts to be united in understanding God's love and God's laws.

I testify of the truth of these things, which are part of the plan of salvation and the doctrine of Christ, of whom I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See Russell M. Nelson, "Divine Love," *Ensign*, Feb. 2003, 20–25.
2. See Alma 42:25.
3. See, for example, Judges 2:12–14; Psalm 7:11; Doctrine and Covenants 5:8; 63:32.
4. See, for example, 2 Kings 23:26–27; Ephesians 5:6; 1 Nephi 22:16–17; Alma 12:35–36; Doctrine and Covenants 84:24.
5. Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 6:312.
6. See Revelation 12:7–8.
7. Letter of Dec. 6, 2005, in author's possession.
8. Compare Alma 42:8.
9. Compare Mosiah 24:14–15.
10. See Matthew 4:17.
11. See Luke 15:3–7.
12. See Thomas S. Monson, "Lost Battalions," *Ensign*, Apr. 1987, 3–6.

13. See also Proverbs 3:12; Revelation 3:19; Doctrine and Covenants 95:1.
14. Russell M. Nelson, in Conference Report, Apr. 1994, 93; or *Ensign*, May 1994, 71.

Elder Robert D. Hales

Importance of belief in God

My brothers and sisters, I express gratitude for the witnesses of God, our Heavenly Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ, given by living prophets during this conference and for the teachings of the Holy Ghost.

As prophesied, we live in a time when the darkness of secularism is deepening around us. Belief in God is widely questioned and even attacked in the name of political, social, and even religious causes. Atheism, or the doctrine that there is no God, is fast spreading across the world.

Even so, as members of the restored Church of Jesus Christ, we declare that “we believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.”¹

Some wonder, why is belief in God so important? Why did the Savior say, “And this is life eternal, that they might *know* thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent”?²

Without God, life would end at the grave and our mortal experiences would have no purpose. Growth and progress would be temporary, accomplishment without value, challenges without meaning. There would be no ultimate right and wrong and no moral responsibility to care for one another as fellow children of God. Indeed, without God, there would be no mortal or eternal life.

If you or someone you love is seeking purpose in life or a deeper conviction of God’s presence in our lives, I offer, as a friend and as an Apostle, my witness. He lives!

Scriptural testimonies

Some may ask, how can I know this for myself? We know He lives because we believe the testimonies of His ancient and living prophets, and we have felt God’s Spirit confirm that the testimonies of these prophets are true.

From their testimonies, recorded in holy scripture, we know that “[God] created man, male and female, after his own image and in his own likeness.”³ Some people may be surprised to learn that we look like God. One prominent religious scholar has even taught that imagining God in the form of man is creating a graven image and is idolatrous and blasphemous.⁴ But God Himself said, “Let *us* make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness.”⁵

The use of the words *us* and *our* in this scripture also teaches us about the relationship between the Father and the Son. God further taught, “By mine Only Begotten [Son] I created these things.”⁶ The Father and the Son are separate and distinct individuals—as any father and son always are. This may be one reason the name of God in Hebrew, *Elohim*, is not singular but plural.

From the New Testament we know that Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, have a physical presence. They stand in one place at one time, as the New Testament disciple Stephen testified: “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.”⁷

We also know that the Father and the Son have voices. As recorded in Genesis and the book of Moses, Adam and Eve “heard the voice of the Lord God, as they

were walking in the garden, in the cool of the day.”⁸

We know that the Father and the Son have faces, that They stand, and that They converse. The prophet Enoch declared, “I saw the Lord; and he stood before my face, and he talked with me, even as a man talketh one with another.”⁹

We know that God and His Son have bodies, in form and parts like ours. From the book of Ether in the Book of Mormon, we read, “And the veil was taken from off the eyes of the brother of Jared, and he saw the finger of the Lord; and it was as the finger of a man, like unto flesh and blood.”¹⁰ Later the Lord revealed Himself, saying, “Behold, this body, which ye now behold, is the body of my spirit; and . . . I [will] appear unto my people in the flesh.”¹¹

We know that the Father and the Son have feelings for us. The book of Moses records, “And it came to pass that the God of heaven looked upon the residue of the people, and he wept.”¹²

And we know that God and His Son, Jesus Christ, are immortal, glorified, and perfected beings. Of the Savior Jesus Christ, the Prophet Joseph Smith recounts, “His eyes were as a flame of fire; the hair of his head was white like the pure snow; his countenance shone above the brightness of the sun; and his voice was as the sound of the rushing of great waters.”¹³

The testimony of Joseph Smith

No testimony is more significant to us in our time than the witness of Joseph Smith. He was the prophet chosen to restore the ancient Church of Christ in this, the last time when the gospel will be on the earth before the return of Jesus Christ. Like all the prophets who opened the work of God in their dispensations, Joseph was given especially clear and powerful prophetic experiences to prepare the world for the Savior’s Second Coming.

As a 14-year-old boy, he sought to know which church he should join. Then, after pondering on the matter, he turned to the Bible, where he read:

“If any of you lack wisdom, let him [or her] ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally . . . ; and it shall be given him.

“But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering.”¹⁴

Believing those prophetic words and with unwavering, childlike faith, Joseph went to a grove of trees near his home and there knelt and prayed. Later he recorded:

“I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head. . . .

“. . . When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air.”¹⁵

Looking up at these two beings, even Joseph could not have known who They were—for he had not yet witnessed and learned the true nature of God and Christ. But then, he records, “one of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*”¹⁶

From that singular experience and others, the Prophet Joseph bore witness, “The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s; the Son also.”¹⁷

The Spirit versus the natural man

Prophets throughout the ages have shared witnesses like this one and continue to do so in this very conference. But each of us has agency to choose. As the eleventh article of faith states, “We claim the privilege of worshipping Almighty God according to the dictates of our *own* conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may.”¹⁸

In matters of personal belief, how do we know what really is true?

I testify that the way to know the truth *about God* is through the Holy Ghost.

The Holy Ghost, the third member of the Godhead, is a personage of spirit. His work is to “testify of [God]”¹⁹ and to “teach [us] all things.”²⁰

However, we must be careful not to constrain His influence. When we do not do what is right or when our outlook is dominated by skepticism, cynicism, criticism, and irreverence toward others and their beliefs, the Spirit cannot be with us. We then act in a way that the prophets describe as the *natural man*.

“The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”²¹ This “natural man is an enemy to God, . . . and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, . . . and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, [and] full of love.”²²

Korihor’s rejection of the truth

If we do not yield to the gentle influence of the Holy Ghost, we stand in jeopardy of becoming like Korihor, an anti-Christ in the Book of Mormon. Not only did Korihor disbelieve in God, but he also ridiculed the Savior, the Atonement, and the spirit of prophecy, falsely teaching that there is no God and no Christ.²³

Korihor was not content merely to reject God and quietly go his own way. He mocked the believers and demanded that the prophet Alma convince him with a sign of God’s existence and power. Alma’s response is as meaningful today as it was then: “Thou hast had signs enough; will ye tempt your God? Will ye say, Show unto me a sign, when ye have the testimony of all these thy brethren, and also all the holy prophets? The scriptures are laid before thee, yea, and all things denote there is a God; yea, even the earth, and all things that are upon the face of it, yea, and its motion, yea, and also all the planets which move in their regular form do witness that there is a Supreme Creator.”²⁴

Eventually Korihor was given a sign. He was struck dumb. “And Korihor put forth his hand and wrote, saying: . . . I know that nothing save it were the power of God could bring this upon me; yea, and I always knew that there was a God.”²⁵

Seeking a testimony of God

Brothers and sisters, you may already know, deep in your soul, that God lives. You may not know all about Him yet and do not understand all His ways, but the light of belief is within you, waiting to be awakened and intensified by the Spirit of God and the Light of Christ, which you are born with.

So come. Believe the testimonies of the prophets. Learn of God and Christ. The pattern to do so is clearly taught by prophets of old and prophets today.

Cultivate a diligent desire to know that God lives.

This desire leads us to ponder on the things of heaven—to let the evidence of God all around us touch our hearts.

With softened hearts we are prepared to heed the Savior’s call to “search the scriptures”²⁶ and to humbly learn from them.

We are then ready to ask our Heavenly Father sincerely, in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ, if the things we have learned are true. Most of us will not see God, as the prophets have, but the still, small promptings of the Spirit—the thoughts and feelings that the Holy Ghost brings into our minds and hearts—will give us an undeniable knowledge that He lives and that He loves us.

Gaining this knowledge is ultimately the quest of all God’s children on the earth. If you cannot remember believing in God or if you have ceased to believe or if you believe but without real conviction, I invite you to seek a testimony of God now. Do not be afraid of ridicule. The strength and peace that come from knowing God and having the comforting companionship of

His Spirit will make your efforts eternally worthwhile.

Even more, with your own testimony of God, you will be able to bless your family, your posterity, your friends, your own life—all those you love. Your personal knowledge of God is not only the greatest gift you will ever give, but it will bring you the greatest joy you will ever have.

As a special witness of the Only Begotten Son of our loving Heavenly Father, even Jesus Christ, I testify that God lives. I *know* He lives. I promise that if you and those you love will seek Him in all humility, sincerity, and diligence, you will know with a surety too. Your witness will come. And the blessings of knowing God will be yours and your family's forever. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Articles of Faith 1:1.
2. John 17:3; italics added.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 20:18; see also Genesis 1:27; Moses 2:27.
4. See Krister Stendahl, "To Speak about God," *Harvard Divinity Bulletin*, vol. 36, no. 2 (spring 2008): 8–9.
5. Genesis 1:26; Moses 2:26; italics added.
6. Moses 2:1.
7. Acts 7:56.
8. Moses 4:14; see also Genesis 3:8.
9. Moses 7:4.
10. Ether 3:6.
11. Ether 3:16.
12. Moses 7:28.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 110:3.
14. James 1:5–6.
15. Joseph Smith—History 1:16–17.
16. Joseph Smith—History 1:17.
17. Doctrine and Covenants 130:22.
18. Articles of Faith 1:11; italics added.
19. John 15:26.
20. John 14:26.
21. 1 Corinthians 2:14.
22. Mosiah 3:19.
23. See Alma 30.
24. Alma 30:44.
25. Alma 30:52.
26. John 5:39.

Elder Jorge F. Zeballos

The command to be perfect

When the twelve disciples were called in the Americas, the Lord Jesus Christ commanded them: "Therefore I would that ye should be perfect even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect."¹ The Savior had recently finalized His successful, selfless, and transcendental mission on earth. This allowed Him to declare with authority that He and His Father, our Father, are the models to be followed by each one of us.

From a purely human point of view, at first this seems to be an impossible task. However, it begins to appear possible upon understanding that in order to achieve it, we are not alone. The most marvelous and powerful helps for which a human being may seek are always available. First is the

generous and loving hand of the Eternal Father, who desires that we return to His presence forever. As our Father, He is always willing and desirous to forgive our errors and weaknesses and the sins we commit, subject only to total and sincere repentance. And as a complement to that—and as the maximum manifestation of His immense love for each one of His children—He provides us with the consequences of the singular work wrought by the Savior, namely the Atonement, brought about by an obedient Son always willing to do the Father's will in benefit to each one of us.

The Lord revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith the following: "And, if you keep my commandments and endure to the end you shall have eternal life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God."²

This divine promise is possible to achieve. Eternal life is to live with our Father and with our families forevermore.³ Should not this promise be the greatest incentive to do the best within our reach and give the best of ourselves in pursuit of what has been promised to us?

Serving with all our being

At the dawning of the Restoration, when this marvelous work was about to appear among the children of men, the Lord said, “Therefore, O ye that embark in the service of God, see that ye serve him with all your heart, might, mind and strength, that ye may stand blameless before God at the last day.”⁴ With all our heart, with all our might, with all our mind, and with all our strength—that is to say, with all our being.

President David O. McKay said that the rich rewards come only to the strenuous strugglers.⁵ These rewards will be for those who nurture faith in Jesus Christ and comply with His will to work, sacrifice, and give all they have received to strengthen and build the kingdom of God.

The fulfillment of the divine promise to have eternal life, to achieve perfection, and to be happy forevermore in the family unit is subject to the sincere demonstration of our faith in Jesus Christ, obedience to the commandments, perseverance, and diligence throughout our lives.

The best of ourselves

The Lord does not expect that we do what we cannot achieve. The command to become perfect, as He is, encourages us to achieve the best of ourselves, to discover and develop the talents and attributes with which we are blessed by a loving Eternal Father, who invites us to realize our potential as children of God. He knows us; He knows of our capacities and our limitations. The invitation and challenge to become perfect, to achieve eternal life, is for all mankind.

Immediately after teaching that “it is not requisite that a man should run faster than he has strength,” King Benjamin indicated that “it is expedient that he should be diligent, that thereby he might win the prize.”⁶ God will not require more than the best we can give because that would not be just, but neither can He accept less than that because that would not be just either. Therefore, let us always give the best we can in the service of God and our fellowmen. Let us serve in our families and in our callings in the Church in the best manner possible. Let us do the best we can and each day be a little better.

Salvation and eternal life would not be possible if it were not for the Atonement, brought about by our Savior, to whom we owe everything. But in order for these supreme blessings to be effective in our lives, we should first do our part, “for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do.”⁷ Let us with faith, enthusiasm, dedication, responsibility, and love do all that is within our reach, and we will be doing all that is possible to achieve the impossible—that is, to achieve what for the human mind is impossible but with the divine intervention of our loving Father and the infinite sacrifice brought about by our Savior becomes the greatest gift, the most glorious of realities, to live forever with God and with our families.

I pray that each one of us will remember and permanently renew, by partaking worthily of the sacrament, the commitment we made with our Heavenly Father the moment we entered the waters of baptism and when we received each one of the ordinances of the restored gospel. I pray that we will do the best we can in our roles as spouses, parents, children, brothers and sisters; in our callings; in sharing the gospel; in rescuing those who have drifted; in working for the salvation of our ancestors; in our work; and in our daily lives.

I pray that our lives allow us to declare, as the Apostle Paul, “I have fought a good

fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.”⁸

As we do so, we will be fulfilling the requirements defined by our Father in Heaven to bless us more than ever before, in this life as much as in life in the eternities. He yearns to give us all that He has, even make us participants of His greatest gift, which is eternal life.

Possible to achieve the impossible

Even when, from a purely human perspective, perfection can appear an impossible challenge to achieve, I testify that our Father and our Savior have made known to us that it is possible to achieve the impossible. Yes, it is possible to achieve eternal life. Yes, it is possible to be happy now and forever.

The author of the perfect plan that contains these glorious promises is our Father in Heaven, and He lives. His Son, Jesus Christ, took upon Himself the weight of our sins and the injustices that are committed in the world to the end that we can be free from the consequences. I know our Lord Jesus Christ lives. The gospel and the priesthood have been restored to the earth for the last time, through the Prophet Joseph Smith. Today we have the enormous blessing of apostles and prophets

called by God to direct us on the road to return to our Father. President Thomas S. Monson has been called to lead this great work in these days. He is a prophet of God. Of that I testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. 3 Nephi 12:48.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.
3. See Guide to the Scriptures, “Eternal Life,” scriptures.lds.org.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 4:2.
5. See *The Teachings of David O. McKay*, comp. Mary Jane Woodger (2004), 300.
6. Mosiah 4:27.
7. 2 Nephi 25:23.
8. 2 Timothy 4:7.

President Eyring

The choir and congregation will now sing “Come, Ye Children of the Lord.” At the conclusion of the singing, Elders Tad R. Callister and Kent D. Watson of the Seventy will speak to us. Following Elder Watson’s remarks, we shall be pleased to hear from Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

The choir and congregation sang
“Come, Ye Children of the Lord.”

Elder Tad R. Callister

Joseph Smith chosen to restore Church

Suppose for a moment someone told you these three facts about a New Testament personality and nothing more: first, the Savior said of this man, “O thou of little faith” (Matthew 14:31); second, this man, in a moment of anger, cut off an ear of the high priest’s servant; and third, this man denied knowing who the Savior was on three occasions, even though he had walked with Him daily. If that is all

you knew or focused upon, you might have thought this man a scoundrel or a no-good, but in the process you would have failed to come to know one of the greatest men who ever walked the earth: Peter the Apostle.

Similarly, attempts have been made by some to focus upon or magnify some minor weaknesses of the Prophet Joseph Smith, but in that process they too have missed the mark, the man, and his mission.

Joseph Smith was the Lord's anointed to restore Christ's Church to the earth. When he emerged from the grove of trees, he eventually learned four fundamental truths not then taught by the majority of the contemporary Christian world.

Four fundamental truths

First, he learned that God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, are two separate, distinct beings. The Bible confirms Joseph Smith's discovery. It tells us that the Son submitted His will to the Father (see Matthew 26:42). We are moved by the Savior's submission and find strength in His example to do likewise, but what would have been the depth and passion of Christ's submission or the motivational power of that example if the Father and the Son were the same being and in reality the Son was merely following His own will under a different name?

The scriptures give further evidence of this great truth: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son" (John 3:16). A father offering up his only son is the supreme demonstration of love that the human mind and heart can conceive and feel. It is symbolized by the touching story of Abraham and Isaac (see Genesis 22). But if the Father is the same being as the Son, then this sacrifice of all sacrifices is lost, and Abraham is no longer offering up Isaac—Abraham is now offering up Abraham.

The second great truth Joseph Smith discovered was that the Father and the Son have glorified bodies of flesh and bones. Following the Savior's Resurrection, He appeared to His disciples and said, "Handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have" (Luke 24:39). Some have suggested this was a temporary physical manifestation and that when He ascended to heaven He shed His body and returned to His spirit form. But the scriptures tell us this was not possible. Paul taught, "Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no

more; death hath no more dominion over him" (Romans 6:9). In other words, once Christ was resurrected, His body could never again be separated from His spirit; otherwise He would suffer death, the very consequence Paul said was no longer possible after His Resurrection.

The third truth that Joseph Smith learned was that God still speaks to man today—that the heavens are not closed. One need but ask three questions, once proposed by President Hugh B. Brown, to arrive at that conclusion (see "The Profile of a Prophet," *Ensign*, June 2006, 37). First, does God love us as much today as He loved the people to whom He spoke in New Testament times? Second, does God have the same power today as He did then? And third, do we need Him as much today as they needed Him anciently? If the answers to those questions are yes and if God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, as the scriptures so declare (see Mormon 9:9), then there is little doubt: God does speak to man today exactly as Joseph Smith testified.

The fourth truth that Joseph Smith learned was that the full and complete Church of Jesus Christ was not then upon the earth. Of course there were good people and some components of the truth, but the Apostle Paul had anciently prophesied that the Second Coming of Christ would not come "except there come a falling away first" (2 Thessalonians 2:3).

"Line upon line, precept upon precept"

Following Joseph Smith's First Vision, the Restoration of Christ's Church commenced "line upon line, precept upon precept" (D&C 98:12).

Through Joseph Smith was restored the doctrine of the gospel being preached to the dead in the spirit world to those who did not have a fair chance on earth to hear it (see D&C 128:5–22; see also D&C 138:30–34). This was not the invention of a creative mind; it was the restoration of a biblical truth. Peter had long ago taught,

“For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit” (1 Peter 4:6). Frederic W. Farrar, the well-known Church of England author and theologian, made the following observation about this teaching of Peter: “Every effort has been made to explain away the plain meaning of *this* passage. It is one of the most precious passages of Scripture, and it involves no ambiguity. . . . For if language have any meaning, this language means that Christ, when His Spirit descended into the lower world, proclaimed the message of salvation to the once impenitent dead” (*The Early Days of Christianity* [1883], 78; italics in original).

Many teach that there is one heaven and one hell. Joseph Smith restored the truth that there are multiple heavens. Paul spoke of a man who was caught up into the third heaven (see 2 Corinthians 12:2). Could there be a third heaven if there was no second heaven or first heaven?

In many ways the gospel of Jesus Christ is like a 1,000-piece jigsaw puzzle. When Joseph Smith came on the scene, perhaps 100 pieces were in place. Then Joseph Smith came along and put many of the other 900 pieces in place so that people could say, “Oh, now I understand where I came from, why I am here, and where I am going.” As for Joseph Smith’s role in the Restoration, the Lord defined it clearly: “This generation shall have my word through you” (D&C 5:10).

Angels and visions

In spite of this flood of restored biblical truths, some honest searchers have commented: “I can accept these doctrines, but what about all those angels and visions Joseph Smith claimed to have? It seems so hard to believe in modern times.”

To those honest searchers, we lovingly respond: “Were there not angels and visions in Christ’s Church in New Testament times? Did not an angel appear to Mary

and to Joseph? Did not angels appear to Peter, James, and John on the Mount of Transfiguration? Did not an angel rescue Peter and John from prison? Did not an angel appear to Cornelius, then to Paul before he was shipwrecked and to John on the Isle of Patmos? Did not Peter have a vision of the gospel going to the Gentiles, Paul a vision of the third heaven, John a vision of the latter days, and Stephen a vision of the Father and Son?”

Yes, Joseph Smith did see angels and visions—because he was the instrument in God’s hands to restore the same Church of Jesus Christ as existed in primitive times—all of its powers as well as all of its doctrines.

Salvation found in one place alone

Yet sorrowfully, on occasion, some are willing to set aside the precious gospel truths restored by Joseph Smith because they get diverted on some historical issue or some scientific hypothesis not central to their exaltation, and in so doing they trade their spiritual birthright for a mess of pottage. They exchange the absolute certainty of the Restoration for a doubt, and in that process they fall into the trap of losing faith in the many things they *do* know because of a few things they do not know. There will always be some seemingly intellectual crisis looming on the horizon as long as faith is required and our minds are finite, but likewise there will always be the sure and solid doctrines of the Restoration to cling to, which will provide the rock foundation upon which our testimonies may be built.

When many of Christ’s followers turned from Him, He asked His Apostles, “Will ye also go away?”

Peter then responded with an answer that should be engraved on every heart: “To whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life” (John 6:67–68).

If someone turns from these restored doctrines, where will he go to learn the true nature of God as taught in the grove

of trees? Where will he go to find the doctrines of the premortal existence, baptism for the dead, and eternal marriage? And where will he go to find the sealing powers that can bind husbands and wives and children beyond the grave?

Through Joseph Smith have been restored all the powers, keys, teachings, and ordinances necessary for salvation and exaltation. You cannot go anywhere else in the world and get that. It is not to be found in any other church. It is not to be found in any philosophy of man or scientific digest

or individual pilgrimage, however intellectual it may seem. Salvation is to be found in one place alone, as so designated by the Lord Himself when He said that this is “the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth” (D&C 1:30).

I bear my witness that Joseph Smith was the prophet of the Restoration, just as he claimed to be. I echo the strains of that stirring hymn: “Praise to the man who communed with Jehovah!” (“Praise to the Man,” *Hymns*, no. 27). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Kent D. Watson

Being temperate in all things

In response to the Prophet Joseph Smith’s inquiry, the Lord instructed, “And no one can assist in this work except he shall be humble and full of love, having faith, hope, and charity, being temperate in all things, whatsoever shall be entrusted to his care.”¹

The instruction on being temperate in all things applies to each of us. What is temperance, and why would the Lord want us to be temperate? A narrow definition might be “exercising restraint when it comes to food and drink.” Indeed, this meaning of temperance could be a good prescription for keeping the Word of Wisdom. Sometimes temperance might be defined as “refraining from anger or not losing one’s temper.” These definitions, however, are a subset of the scriptural usage of the word.

In a spiritual sense, temperance is a divine attribute of Jesus Christ. He desires for each of us to develop this attribute. Learning to be temperate in all things is a spiritual gift available through the Holy Ghost.

When the Apostle Paul described certain fruits of the Spirit in his Epistle to the

Galatians, he talked of “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, [and] temperance.”²

When Paul wrote Titus, describing the attributes necessary for a bishop to assist in this work, he said a bishop must “not [be] selfwilled, not soon angry, . . . [but] temperate.”³ Being temperate is to use moderation in all things or to exercise self-control.

When Alma the Younger taught in the land of Gideon, he said:

“I trust that ye are not lifted up in the pride of your hearts; yea, I trust that ye have not set your hearts upon riches and the vain things of the world. . . .

“I would that ye should be humble, and be submissive and gentle; easy to be entreated; full of patience and long-suffering; being temperate in all things.”⁴

In a later message, Alma instructed his son Shiblon, and by extension instructs all of us, to “see that ye are not lifted up unto pride.”⁵ Rather, we should “be diligent and temperate in all things.”⁶ Being temperate means to carefully examine our expectations and desires, to be diligent and patient in seeking righteous goals.

Temperance increases our strength

A few years ago, I was driving home from work when a large semitruck, traveling in the opposite direction, lost one of its dual tires. The tire flew over the median separating our lanes. It came bouncing down my side of the freeway. Cars were swerving in both directions, drivers not knowing which direction the tire would bounce next. I dodged left when I should have dodged right, and the tire took its final bounce right on the corner of my windshield.

A friend called my wife to inform her of the accident. She told me later that her first thought was of lacerations from shattered glass. Indeed, I was covered with beads of broken glass but did not suffer a single scratch. It was definitely not because of my driving skills; rather, it was because the windshield of my little car was made of tempered glass.

Tempered glass, like tempered steel, undergoes a well-controlled heating process which increases strength. Thus, when tempered glass is under stress, it will not easily break into jagged shards that can injure.

Likewise, a temperate soul—one who is humble and full of love—is also a person of increased spiritual strength. With increased spiritual strength, we are able to develop self-mastery and to live with moderation. We learn to control, or temper, our anger, vanity, and pride. With increased spiritual strength, we can protect ourselves from the dangerous excesses and destructive addictions of today's world.

We all seek peace of mind, and we all desire security and happiness for our families. If we look for silver linings in this past year's economic downturn, perhaps the trials some have faced have taught us that peace of mind, security, and happiness do not come from buying a home or accumulating possessions for which the debt incurred is larger than our savings or income can afford.

We live in an impatient and intemperate world full of uncertainty and contention. It is like the community of converts to various religions where Joseph Smith lived when he was a 14-year-old boy seeking answers to his questions. Young Joseph said, "All their good feelings one for another, if they ever had any, were entirely lost in a strife of words and a contest about opinions."⁷

Security for our families comes from learning self-control, avoiding the excesses of this world, and being temperate in all things. Peace of mind comes from strengthened faith in Jesus Christ. Happiness comes from being diligent in keeping covenants made at baptism and in the holy temples of the Lord.

The Savior's example of temperance

What better example do we have of temperance than our Savior, Jesus Christ?

When our hearts are stirred to anger by disputation and contention, the Savior taught that we should "repent, and become as a little child."⁸ We should be reconciled with our brother and come to the Savior with full purpose of heart.⁹

When others are unkind, Jesus taught that "my kindness shall not depart from thee."¹⁰

When we are confronted with affliction, He said: "Be patient in afflictions, revile not against those that revile. Govern your house in meekness, and be steadfast."¹¹

When we are oppressed, we can be comforted in knowing "he was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth."¹² "Surely he has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows."¹³

When Jesus Christ, the greatest of all, suffered for us to the extent that He bled from every pore, He did not express anger or revile in suffering. With unsurpassed self-restraint, or temperance, His thoughts were not of Himself but of you and of me. And then, in humility and full of love, He said, "Nevertheless, glory be to the Father,

and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men.”¹⁴

Example of Saints in Asia

During this past year, it has been my privilege to bear testimony of the reality of our Savior and the Restoration of the gospel to Saints and friends throughout Asia. Most are first-generation Latter-day Saints who live on the frontier of the Church. This latter-day journey in their realm is reminiscent of that experienced by the first Latter-day Saints of yesteryear.

In this marvelous world of diversity in Asia, where members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are a mere fraction of one percent of the vast population, I have gained a better appreciation for the Christlike attribute of temperance. I love and honor these Saints, who have taught me by example what it means to be humble and full of love, “being temperate in all things, whatsoever shall be

entrusted to [their] care.”¹⁵ Through them I have come to better understand God’s love for all of His children.

I leave my witness that our Redeemer lives and His divine gift of temperance is available to each of God’s children, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 12:8.
2. Galatians 5:22–23.
3. Titus 1:7–8.
4. Alma 7:6, 23.
5. Alma 38:11.
6. Alma 38:10.
7. Joseph Smith—History 1:6.
8. 3 Nephi 11:37.
9. See 3 Nephi 12:24.
10. 3 Nephi 22:10.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 31:9.
12. Mosiah 14:7.
13. Mosiah 14:4.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 19:19.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 12:8.

Elder Neil L. Andersen

My brothers and sisters, it has been six months since my call to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. To now serve with men who have long been my examples and teachers remains a very humbling experience. I deeply appreciate your prayers and sustaining vote. For me, this has been a time of fervent prayer, of earnestly seeking the acceptance of the Lord. I have felt His love in sacred and unforgettable ways. I testify that He lives and that this is His holy work.

Arms of mercy

We love President Thomas S. Monson, the Lord’s prophet. I will forever remember his kindness as he extended my call last April. At the conclusion of our interview, he opened his arms to embrace me. President Monson is a tall man. As

he wrapped his long arms around me and pulled me close, I felt like a little boy being held in the protective arms of a loving father.

In the months since that experience, I have thought of the Lord’s invitation to come unto Him and to spiritually be wrapped in His arms. He said, “Behold, [my arms] of mercy [are] extended towards you, and whosoever will come, him will I receive; and blessed are those who come unto me.”¹

The scriptures speak of His arms being open,² extended,³ stretched out,⁴ and encircling.⁵ They are described as mighty⁶ and holy,⁷ arms of mercy,⁸ arms of safety,⁹ arms of love,¹⁰ “lengthened out all the day long.”¹¹

We have each felt to some extent these spiritual arms around us. We have felt His forgiveness, His love and comfort. The

Lord has said, "I am he [who] comforteth you."¹²

Invitation to repent

The Lord's desire that we come unto Him and be wrapped in His arms is often an invitation to repent. "Behold, he sendeth an invitation unto all men, for the arms of mercy are extended towards them, and he saith: Repent, and I will receive you."¹³

When we sin, we turn away from God. When we repent, we turn back toward God.

The invitation to repent is rarely a voice of chastisement but rather a loving appeal to turn around and to "re-turn" toward God.¹⁴ It is the beckoning of a loving Father and His Only Begotten Son to be more than we are, to reach up to a higher way of life, to change, and to feel the happiness of keeping the commandments. Being disciples of Christ, we rejoice in the blessing of repenting and the joy of being forgiven. They become part of us, shaping the way we think and feel.

Among the tens of thousands listening to this conference, there are many degrees of personal worthiness and righteousness. Yet repentance is a blessing to all of us. We each need to feel the Savior's arms of mercy through the forgiveness of our sins.

Years ago, I was asked to meet with a man who, long before our visit, had had a period of riotous living. As a result of his bad choices, he lost his membership in the Church. He had long since returned to the Church and was faithfully keeping the commandments, but his previous actions haunted him. Meeting with him, I felt his shame and his deep remorse at having set his covenants aside. Following our interview, I placed my hands upon his head to give him a priesthood blessing. Before speaking a word, I felt an overpowering sense of the Savior's love and forgiveness for him. Following the blessing, we embraced and the man wept openly.

I am amazed at the Savior's encircling arms of mercy and love for the repentant, no matter how selfish the forsaken sin. I testify that the Savior is able and eager to forgive our sins. Except for the sins of those few who choose perdition after having known a fulness, there is no sin that cannot be forgiven.¹⁵ What a marvelous privilege for each of us to turn away from our sins and to come unto Christ. Divine forgiveness is one of the sweetest fruits of the gospel, removing guilt and pain from our hearts and replacing them with joy and peace of conscience. Jesus declares, "Will ye not now return unto me, and repent of your sins, and be converted, that I may heal you?"¹⁶

The process of repentance

Some listening today may need "a mighty change [of] heart"¹⁷ to confront serious sins. The help of a priesthood leader might be necessary. For most, repenting is quiet and quite private, daily seeking the Lord's help to make needed changes.

For most, repentance is more a journey than a one-time event. It is not easy. To change is difficult. It requires running into the wind, swimming upstream. Jesus said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."¹⁸ Repentance is turning away from some things, such as dishonesty, pride, anger, and impure thoughts, and turning toward other things, such as kindness, unselfishness, patience, and spirituality. It is "re-turning" toward God.

How do we decide where our repentance should be focused? When a loved one or friend suggests things we need to change, the natural man in us sometimes pops up his head and responds, "Oh, you think I should change? Well, let me tell you about some of your problems." A better approach is to humbly petition the Lord: "Father, what wouldst Thou have me do?" The answers come. We feel the

changes we need to make. The Lord tells us in our mind and in our heart.¹⁹

We then are allowed to choose: will we repent, or will we pull the shades down over our open window into heaven?

Alma warned, “Do not endeavor to excuse yourself in the least point.”²⁰ When we “pull the shades down,” we stop believing that spiritual voice inviting us to change. We pray but we listen less. Our prayers lack that faith that leads to repentance.²¹

At this very moment, someone is saying, “Brother Andersen, you don’t understand. You can’t feel what I have felt. It is too difficult to change.”

You are correct; I don’t fully understand. But there is One who does. He knows. He has felt your pain. He has declared, “I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands.”²² The Savior is there, reaching out to each of us, bidding us: “Come unto me.”²³ We can repent. We can!

Realizing where we need to change, we sorrow for the sadness we have caused. This leads to sincere and heartfelt confession to the Lord and, when needed, to others.²⁴ When possible, we restore what we have wrongly harmed or taken.

Repentance becomes part of our daily lives. Our weekly taking of the sacrament is so important—to come meekly, humbly before the Lord, acknowledging our dependence upon Him, asking Him to forgive and to renew us, and promising to always remember Him.

Sometimes in our repentance, in our daily efforts to become more Christlike, we find ourselves repeatedly struggling with the same difficulties. As if we were climbing a tree-covered mountain, at times we don’t see our progress until we get closer to the top and look back from the high ridges. Don’t be discouraged. If you are striving and working to repent, you are in the process of repenting.

As we improve, we see life more clearly and feel the Holy Ghost working more strongly within us.

Remembering our sins

Sometimes we wonder why we remember our sins long after we have forsaken them. Why does the sadness for our mistakes at times continue following our repentance?

You will remember a tender story told by President James E. Faust. “As a small boy on the farm . . . , I remember my grandmother . . . cooking our delicious meals on a hot woodstove. When the wood box next to the stove became empty, Grandmother would silently pick up the box, go out to refill it from the pile of cedar wood outside, and bring the heavily laden box back into the house.”

President Faust’s voice then filled with emotion as he continued: “I was so insensitive . . . I sat there and let my beloved grandmother refill the kitchen wood box. I feel ashamed of myself and have regretted my [sin of] omission for all of my life. I hope someday to ask for her forgiveness.”²⁵

More than 65 years had passed. If President Faust still remembered and regretted not helping his grandmother after all those years, should we be surprised with some of the things we still remember and regret?

The scriptures do not say that we will forget our forsaken sins in mortality. Rather, they declare that the Lord will forget.²⁶

The forsaking of sins implies never returning. Forsaking requires time. To help us, the Lord at times allows the residue of our mistakes to rest in our memory.²⁷ It is a vital part of our mortal learning.

As we honestly confess our sins, restore what we can to the offended, and forsake our sins by keeping the commandments, we are in the process of receiving forgiveness. With time, we will feel the anguish of our sorrow subside, taking “away the guilt from our hearts”²⁸ and bringing “peace of conscience.”²⁹

For those who are truly repentant but seem unable to feel relief: continue keeping the commandments. I promise you, relief will come in the timetable of the Lord. Healing also requires time.

If you are concerned, counsel with your bishop. A bishop has the power of discernment.³⁰ He will help you.

It is never too late

The scriptures warn us, “Do not procrastinate the day of your repentance.”³¹ But, in this life, it is never too late to repent.

Once I was asked to meet an older couple returning to the Church. They had been taught the gospel by their parents. After their marriage, they left the Church. Now, 50 years later, they were returning. I remember the husband coming into the office pulling an oxygen tank. They expressed regret at not having remained faithful. I told them of our happiness because of their return, assuring them of the Lord’s welcoming arms to those who repent. The elderly man responded, “We know this, Brother Andersen. But our sadness is that our children and grandchildren do not have the blessings of the gospel. We are back, but we are back alone.”

They were not back alone. Repentance not only changes us, but it also blesses our families and those we love. With our righteous repentance, in the timetable of the Lord, the lengthened-out arms of the Savior will not only encircle us but will also extend into the lives of our children and posterity. Repentance always means that there is greater happiness ahead.

I bear witness that our Savior can deliver us from our sins. I have personally felt His redeeming power. I have unmistakably seen His healing hand upon thousands in nations throughout the world. I testify that His divine gift removes guilt from our heart and brings peace to our conscience.

He loves us. We are members of His Church. He invites each of us to repent,

turn away from our sins, and come unto Him. I witness that He is there in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. 3 Nephi 9:14.
2. See Mormon 6:17.
3. See Alma 19:36.
4. See 2 Kings 17:36; Psalm 136:12.
5. See 2 Nephi 1:15.
6. See Doctrine and Covenants 123:6.
7. See 3 Nephi 20:35.
8. See Alma 5:33.
9. See Alma 34:16.
10. See Doctrine and Covenants 6:20.
11. 2 Nephi 28:32.
12. 2 Nephi 8:12.
13. Alma 5:33.
14. See Helaman 7:17.
15. See Boyd K. Packer, in Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 22; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 19.
16. 3 Nephi 9:13.
17. Alma 5:12.
18. Matthew 16:24.
19. See Doctrine and Covenants 8:2.
20. Alma 42:30.
21. See Alma 34:17–18.
22. Isaiah 49:16.
23. 3 Nephi 9:14.
24. See Doctrine and Covenants 58:43.
25. James E. Faust, in Conference Report, Oct. 1997, 78; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 59.
26. See Doctrine and Covenants 58:42–43; see also Alma 36:17–19.
27. See Dieter F. Uchtdorf, in Conference Report, Apr. 2007, 101–2; or *Ensign*, May 2007, 101.
28. Alma 24:10.
29. Mosiah 4:3. The scriptures link our happiness in this life and the next with peace of conscience. Note Alma’s teaching that the opposite of joy is remorse of conscience (see Alma 29:5). Other prophets tie the torment of the wicked following this life to the guilt they feel (see 2 Nephi 9:14, 46; Mosiah 2:38; 3:24–25; Mormon 9:5). Joseph Smith said: “A man is his own tormentor and his own condemner. Hence the saying, They shall go into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. The torment of disappointment in the mind

of man is as exquisite as a lake burning with fire and brimstone” (in *History of the Church*, 6:314).

30. See Doctrine and Covenants 46:27.

31. Alma 34:33.

President Eyring

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting, which will commence in the Conference Center this evening at 6:00 mountain daylight time.

The nationwide Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from

9:30 to 10:00 mountain daylight time. The Sunday morning session of conference will immediately follow.

We thank the choir for the beautiful music they have provided this afternoon.

President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, will be our concluding speaker at this session. Following his remarks, the choir will sing “I Know That My Redeemer Lives.” At the conclusion of the singing, the benediction will be offered by Elder Robert S. Wood, who was released as a member of the Seventy this afternoon.

President Boyd K. Packer

Means of protection and communication

No Father would send His children off to a distant, dangerous land for a lifetime of testing where Lucifer was known to roam free without first providing them with a personal power of protection. He would also supply them with means to communicate with Him from Father to child and from child to Father. Every child of our Father sent to earth is provided with the Spirit of Christ, or the Light of Christ.¹ We are, none of us, left here alone without hope of guidance and redemption.

The Restoration began with the prayer of a 14-year-old boy and a vision of the Father and the Son. The dispensation of the fulness of times was ushered in.

The Restoration of the gospel brought knowledge of the premortal existence. From the scriptures, we know of the Council in Heaven and the decision to send the sons and daughters of God into mortality to receive a body and to be tested.² We are children of God. We have a spirit body housed, for now, in an earthly tabernacle of flesh. The scriptures say, “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” (1 Corinthians 3:16).

As children of God, we learn we are part of His “great plan of happiness” (Alma 42:8).

We know that there was a War in Heaven and Lucifer and those who followed him were cast out without bodies:

“Satan, that old serpent, even the devil, . . . rebelled against God, and sought to take the kingdom of our God and his Christ—

“Wherefore, he maketh war with the saints of God, and encompasseth them round about” (D&C 76:28–29).

We were given our agency.³ We must use it wisely and remain close to the Spirit; otherwise, we foolishly find ourselves yielding to the enticements of the adversary. We know that through the Atonement of Jesus Christ our mistakes can be washed clean, and our mortal body will be restored to its perfect frame.

“For behold, the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil; wherefore, I show unto you the way to judge; for every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God” (Moroni 7:16).

There is a perfect manner of communication through the Spirit, “for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God” (1 Corinthians 2:10).

Following baptism into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, there comes a second ordinance: “Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Articles of Faith 1:4).

That sweet, quiet voice of inspiration comes more as a feeling than it does as a sound. Pure intelligence can be spoken into the mind. The Holy Ghost communicates with our spirits through the mind more than through the physical senses.⁴ This guidance comes as thoughts, as feelings through promptings and impressions.⁵ We may *feel* the words of spiritual communication more than *hear* them and *see* with spiritual rather than with mortal eyes.⁶

Wilford Woodruff's experience

I served for many years in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles with Elder LeGrand Richards. He died at the age of 96. He told us that as a boy of 12 he attended a great general conference in the Tabernacle. There he heard President Wilford Woodruff.

President Woodruff told of an experience of being prompted by the Spirit. He was sent by the First Presidency to “gather all the Saints of God in New England and Canada and bring them to Zion.”⁷

He stopped at the home of one of the brethren in Indiana and put his carriage in the yard, where he and his wife and one child went to bed while the rest of the family slept in the house. Shortly after he had retired for the night, the Spirit whispered, warning him, “Get up, and move your carriage.” He got up and moved the carriage a distance from where it had stood. As he was returning to bed, the Spirit spoke to him again: “Go and move your mules away from that oak tree.” He did this and then retired once again to bed.

Not more than 30 minutes later, a whirlwind caught the tree to which his

mules had been tied and broke it off at the ground. It was carried 100 yards through two fences. The enormous tree, which had a trunk five feet in circumference, fell exactly upon the spot where his carriage had been parked. By listening to the promptings of the Spirit, Elder Woodruff had saved his life and the lives of his wife and child.⁸

That same Spirit can prompt you and protect you.

Prayer of a child

When I was first called as a General Authority nearly 50 years ago, we lived on a very small plot of ground in Utah Valley that we called our farm. We had a cow and a horse and chickens and lots of children.

One Saturday, I was to drive to the airport for a flight to a stake conference in California. But the cow was expecting a calf and in trouble. The calf was born, but the cow could not get up. We called the veterinarian, who soon came. He said the cow had swallowed a wire and would not live through the day.

I copied the telephone number of the animal by-products company so my wife could call them to come and get the cow as soon as she died.

Before I left, we had our family prayer. Our little boy said our prayer. After he had asked Heavenly Father to “bless Daddy in his travels and bless us all,” he then started an earnest plea. He said, “Heavenly Father, please bless Bossy cow so that she will get to be all right.”

In California, I told of the incident and said, “He must learn that we do not get everything we pray for just that easily.”

There was a lesson to be learned, but it was I who learned it, not my son. When I returned Sunday night, Bossy had “got to be all right.”

This process is not reserved for the prophets alone. The gift of the Holy Ghost operates equally with men, women, and even little children. It is within this

wondrous gift and power that the spiritual remedy to any problem can be found.

“And now, he imparteth his word by angels unto men, yea, not only men but women also. Now this is not all; little children do have words given unto them many times, which confound the wise and the learned” (Alma 32:23).

“Bud’s in trouble!”

The Lord has many ways of pouring knowledge into our minds to prompt us, to guide us, to teach us, to correct us, to warn us. The Lord said, “I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart” (D&C 8:2).

And Enos recorded, “While I was thus struggling in the spirit, behold, the voice of the Lord came into my mind again” (Enos 1:10).

You can know the things you need to know. Pray that you will learn to receive that inspiration and remain worthy to receive it. Keep that channel—your mind—clean and free from the clutter of the world.

Elder Graham W. Doxey, who once served in the Second Quorum of the Seventy, told me of an experience. His mother, who was later a counselor in the Primary general presidency, also told me of this experience.

During World War II, he was in the navy posted to China. He and several others went by train to the city of Tientsin to look around.

Later they boarded a train to return to their base, but after more than an hour, the train turned north. They were on the wrong train! They spoke no Chinese. They pulled the emergency cord and stopped the train. They were put off somewhere in the countryside with nothing to do but walk back to the city.

After walking for some time, they found a small pump-handle car, the kind that the railroad workers use. They set it

in the rails and began to pump their way along the tracks. It would coast downhill, but it had to be pushed uphill.

As they came to one steep downhill slope, they scrambled aboard the car and began to coast. Graham was the last to get aboard. The only place left for him was in the front of the car. He ran alongside and finally climbed aboard. As he did so, he slipped and fell. He was bouncing on his back with his feet against the car to keep from being run over. As the car quickly gained speed, he heard his mother’s voice say, “Bud, you be careful!”

He wore heavy military boots. His foot slipped, and the thick sole of his boot caught in a gear of a wheel and stopped the car just one foot from his hand.

His parents, who were presiding over the East Central States Mission at the time, were sleeping in a hotel room. His mother sat up at about 2:00 in the morning and awakened her husband: “Bud’s in trouble!” They knelt by the bed and prayed for the safety of their boy.

The next letter he received said, “Bud, what’s wrong? What happened to you?”

He then wrote to tell them what had happened. When they compared times, at the very time he was bouncing along that track, his parents were on their knees in the hotel room half a world away, praying for his safety.

These experiences of prompting and prayer are not uncommon in the Church. They are part of the revelation our Heavenly Father has provided for us.

Prayer, a personal key to heaven

One of the adversary’s sharpest tools is to convince us that we are no longer worthy to pray. No matter who you are or what you may have done, you can always pray.

The Prophet Joseph Smith promised that “all beings who have bodies have power over those who have not.”⁹

When temptation comes, you can invent a delete key in your mind—perhaps the words from a favorite hymn. Your mind is in charge; your body is the instrument of your mind. When some unworthy thought pushes into your mind, replace it with your delete key. Worthy music is powerful and can help you control your thoughts.¹⁰

When Oliver Cowdery failed in an attempt to translate, the Lord told him:

“Behold, you have not understood; you have supposed that I would give it unto you, when you took no thought save it was to ask me.

“But, behold, I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right.

“But if it be not right you shall have no such feelings” (D&C 9:7–9).

That principle is illustrated by the story of a little girl. She was upset with her brother, who built a trap to catch sparrows.

Unable to get help, she said to herself, “Well, I’ll pray about it.”

After her prayer, the little girl told her mother, “I know he is not going to catch any sparrows in his trap because I prayed about it. I’m *positive* he won’t catch any sparrows!”

Her mother said, “How can you be so sure?”

She said, “After I prayed about it, I went out and kicked that old trap all to pieces!”

Pray even if you are young and wayward like the prophet Alma or have a closed mind like Amulek, who “knew concerning these things, yet . . . would not know” (Alma 10:6).

Learn to pray. Pray often. Pray in your mind, in your heart. Pray on your knees. Prayer is your personal key to heaven. The lock is on your side of the veil. And I have learned to conclude all my prayers with

“Thy will be done” (Matthew 6:10; see also Luke 11:2; 3 Nephi 13:10).

Enduring life’s troubles

Do not expect to be free entirely from trouble and disappointment and pain and discouragement, for these are the things that we were sent to earth to endure.

Someone wrote:

With thoughtless and impatient hands
We tangle up the plans
The Lord hath wrought.
And when we cry in pain He saith,
“Be quiet, man, while I untie the knot.”¹¹

The scriptures promise, “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Corinthians 10:13).

The Savior said, “Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you; seek me diligently and ye shall find me; ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (D&C 88:63).

Witness concerning President Monson

We began this session of conference with the sustaining of the authorities. The first one sustained was Thomas S. Monson as President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I know President Monson, I think, as well as any man on earth knows him, and I want to bear a special witness that he was “called of God, by prophecy” (Articles of Faith 1:5). He needs our prayers—and his wife, Frances, and their family—in the tremendous load that is upon him.

I pray that he will be sustained in body and in mind and in spirit and that it will be obvious to the Church, as it is obvious to those who are very close to him, that he was “called of God, by prophecy.”

Then, “by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof” (Articles of Faith 1:5), he was installed in his office.

May the Lord bless us and sustain President Monson and his family in every way that will be needful to carry on the great work that is upon his shoulders. I bear that witness and invoke that blessing as a servant of the Lord and in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:46.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 138:56; see also Romans 8:16.
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 101:78.
4. See 1 Corinthians 2:14; Doctrine and Covenants 8:2; 9:8–9.

5. See Doctrine and Covenants 11:13; 100:5.
6. See 1 Nephi 17:45.
7. See Wilford Woodruff, in Conference Report, Apr. 1898, 30; see also *Deseret Weekly*, Sept. 5, 1891, 323.
8. See Wilford Woodruff, *Leaves from My Journal* (1881), 88.
9. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 211.
10. See Doctrine and Covenants 25:12.
11. Author unknown, in Jack M. Lyon and others, eds., *Best-Loved Poems of the LDS People* (1996), 304.

The choir sang “I Know That My Redeemer Lives.”

Elder Robert S. Wood offered the benediction.

GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session of the 179th Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 6:00 p.m. on Saturday, October 3, 2009. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf conducted this session.

An Aaronic Priesthood choir from stakes in West Jordan, Utah, provided the music. Neil Hendriksen directed the choir, and Andrew Unsworth was the organist.

President Uchtdorf opened the meeting with the following remarks.

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf

We welcome you, brethren, to the general priesthood session of the 179th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Thomas S. Monson, who presides, has asked that I conduct this session.

These services are being relayed by satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Tabernacle, the

Assembly Hall, the BYU Marriott Center, the Provo Missionary Training Center, and in other locations in many countries throughout the world.

The singing during this session will be furnished by an Aaronic Priesthood choir from stakes in West Jordan, Utah, under the direction of Neil Hendriksen, with Andrew Unsworth at the organ.

We shall begin this priesthood session with the choir singing “High on the Mountain Top.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Dennis B. Neuenschwander, who was released this afternoon as a member of the Seventy.

The choir sang “High on the Mountain Top.”

Elder Dennis B. Neuenschwander offered the invocation.

President Uchtdorf

The choir will now sing “Sweet Hour of Prayer.” Following the singing, Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will address us, after which we shall hear from Elder Walter F.

González of the Presidency of the Seventy. He will be followed by Elder Yoon Hwan Choi of the Seventy.

The choir sang “Sweet Hour of Prayer.”

Elder M. Russell Ballard

Father-son relationships

It is a wonderful sight to see all of you fathers sitting shoulder to shoulder with your sons to listen to the teachings of the Lord and receive counsel from the General Authorities of the Church. It is always a joy to be united with men and young men of the priesthood, but there is something special about seeing fathers and sons here together. It is a visual reminder of two of the most powerful elements of our theology: priesthood and family. The priesthood is the divine power through which families are sealed together forever. Everything in the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, including the ordinances of the holy temple, is focused on the possibilities of families becoming part of the eternal family of God.

Tonight I want to talk to you fathers and sons about how you talk to each other. There is no other relationship quite like that which can and should exist between a boy and his dad. It can be one of the most nurturing, joyful relationships in life, one that can have a profound impact on who boys become and also on who dads become. Now, I understand that some of you young men do not have fathers with whom you can have these kinds of conversations. And some of you men do not have sons or have lost your sons to accident or illness. But much of what I say tonight will apply to uncles and grandfathers and priesthood leaders and other mentors who sometimes fill the gaps for these significant father-son relationships.

You see, we’re all on a journey. Dads are a little further down the road, but none of us has yet arrived at our final destination. We are all in the process of becoming who we will one day be. Fathers and sons can play a critical role in helping each other become the best that they can be.

I know that father-son relationships are never perfect, but everything I am going to suggest to you tonight is possible if you will put in the effort to make it happen.

Young men, you are your father’s pride and joy. In you they see a promising future and their hope for a better, improved version of themselves. Your accomplishments are a joy to them. Your worries and problems are their worries and problems.

Fathers, you are the primary model of manhood for your sons. You are their most meaningful mentor, and believe it or not, you are their hero in countless ways. Your words and your example are a great influence on them.

Tonight I want to give you young men *three* simple suggestions on how to take full advantage of your relationship with your dad. And then I want to give you fathers *three* suggestions about relating to and communicating with your sons.

Counsel for sons

To you Aaronic Priesthood holders, I believe that by doing these three simple things you can make your relationship with your father even better than it is right now.

Trust your father

First, trust your father. He is not perfect, but he loves you and would never do anything he didn't think was in your best interest. So talk to him. Share your thoughts and feelings, your dreams and your fears. The more he knows about your life, the better chance he has to understand your concerns and to give you good counsel. When you put your trust in your dad, he will feel the responsibility of that trust and try harder than ever to understand and to help. As your father, he is entitled to inspiration on your behalf. His advice to you will be the heartfelt expressions of someone who knows and loves you. Your dad wants more than anything for you to be happy and successful, so why would you not want to trust someone like that? Boys, trust your dad.

Be interested in your father's life

Second, take an interest in your father's life. Ask about his job, his interests, his goals. How did he decide to do the work that he does? What was he like when he was your age? How did he meet your mother? And as you learn more about him, you may find that his experiences help you to better understand why he responds the way that he does. Watch your dad. Watch how he treats your mother. Watch how he performs his Church callings. Watch how he interacts with other people. You will be surprised what you learn about him just by watching him and listening to him. Think about what you don't know about him and find out. Your love, admiration, and understanding will increase by what you learn. Boys, be interested in your dad's life.

Ask your father for advice

And *third*, ask your father for advice. Let's be honest: he is probably going to give you his advice whether you ask for it or not, but it just works so much better when you ask! Ask for his advice on

Church activity, on classes, on friends, on school, on dating, on sports or other hobbies. Ask for his counsel on your Church assignments, on preparing for your mission, on decisions or choices you have to make. Nothing shows respect for another person as much as asking for his advice, because what you are really saying when you ask for advice is, "I appreciate what you know and the experiences you have had, and I value your ideas and suggestions." Those are nice things for a father to hear from his son.

In my experience, fathers who are asked for advice try harder to give good, sound, useful counsel. By asking your father for advice, you not only receive the benefit of his input, but you also provide him with a little extra motivation to strive to be a better father and a better man. He will think more carefully about whatever it is that he advises, and he will work harder to "walk the talk." Young men, ask your dad for advice!

Counsel for fathers

OK, fathers, now it's your turn. Let's talk about some things you can do to enhance your relationship with your sons. You will notice that there is some linkage between the three suggestions I am going to give you and the suggestions I just gave your sons. That isn't coincidental.

Listen to your sons

First, fathers, listen to your sons—really listen to them. Ask the right kind of questions, and listen to what your sons have to say each time you have a few minutes together. You need to know—not to guess but to know—what is going on in your son's life. Don't assume that you know how he feels just because you were young once. Your sons live in a very different world from the one in which you grew up. As they share with you what's going on, you will have to listen very carefully and without being judgmental in order to

understand what they are thinking and experiencing.

Find your own best way to connect. Some fathers like to take their sons fishing or to a sporting event. Others like to go on a quiet drive or work side by side in the yard. Some find their sons enjoy conversations at night just before going to bed. Do whatever works best for you. A one-on-one relationship should be a routine part of your stewardship with your sons. Every father needs at least one focused, quality conversation with his sons every month during which they talk about specific things such as school, friends, feelings, video games, text messaging, worthiness, faith, and testimony. Where or when this happens isn't nearly as important as the fact that it happens.

And oh, how fathers need to listen! Remember, conversation where you do 90 percent of the talking is not a conversation. Use the word *feel* as often as you comfortably can in your discussions with your sons. Ask: "How do you feel about what you're learning in that class?" "How do you feel about what your friend said?" "How do you feel about your priesthood and the Church?"

Don't think you have to try to fix everything or solve everything during these visits. Most of the time, the best thing you can do is just listen. Fathers who listen more than they talk find that their sons share more about what is really going on in their lives. Dads, listen to your sons.

Pray with and for your sons

Second, pray with and for your sons. Give them priesthood blessings. A son who is worried about a big exam or a special event will surely benefit from a father's priesthood blessing. Occasions like the start of a new school year, a birthday, or as he begins to date may be opportune times to call upon the Lord to bless your son. One-on-one prayer and the sharing of testimonies can draw you closer to each other as well as closer to the Lord.

I am mindful that many of you fathers suffer heartache over sons who have strayed and are being captured by the world, just as Alma and Mosiah worried about their sons. Continue to do all you can to maintain strong family relationships. Never give up, even when fervent prayer in their behalf is all you can do. These precious sons of yours are your sons forever! Fathers, pray with and bless your sons.

Have the "big talks" with your sons

Third, dare to have the "big talks" with your sons. You know what I mean: talks about drugs and drinking, about the dangers of today's media—the Internet, cyber technologies, and pornography—and about priesthood worthiness, respect for girls, and moral cleanliness. While these should not be the only subjects you talk about with your sons, please don't shy away from them. Your boys need your counsel, guidance, and input on these subjects. As you talk about these very important matters, you will find that the trust between you will flourish.

I am especially concerned that we communicate openly and clearly with our sons about sexual matters. Your sons are growing up in a world that openly embraces and flaunts early, casual, and thoughtless promiscuity. Your sons simply cannot avoid the blatant sexual imagery, messages, and enticements that are all around them. Fathers and Church leaders need to have open and frequent discussions that teach and clarify how young men of the priesthood handle this issue. Be positive about how wonderful and beautiful physical intimacy can be when it happens within the bounds the Lord has set, including temple covenants and commitments of eternal marriage. Studies show that the biggest deterrent to casual sexual activity is a wholesome attitude that connects such personal relationships with genuine commitment and mature love. Fathers, if you have not had this "big talk" with your sons, please do so, and do it soon.

Returned missionary sons

Now, in closing, I want to talk to all of you returned missionaries. Everything that I have said tonight also applies to you. Trust your father. You can be closer to him now than ever before, regardless of what your relationship was like before your mission. During the next few years, you will make the most important decisions of your life. Along with prayer to your Heavenly Father, advice from your earthly father can help you make those decisions concerning your education, career choice, and marriage. The most important decision you will make in this life is the decision to marry the right girl in the temple! While no one should rush this significant decision, all returned missionaries should be working on it. Be where you can meet the right kind of friends. And go on dates. Hanging out is not the way, nor is it enough! Courting seems to be a lost art. Rediscover it. It really works! Ask

your fathers—they know! Do not drift to the ways of the world. Rather, maintain the dignity and the Spirit you enjoyed on your mission. The Church will need your leadership in the future.

And fathers, the three suggestions I made to you moments ago absolutely apply to your relationships with your returned missionary sons. Listen to them, and connect with them in regular, focused conversation. Talk with them in depth about their feelings and desires. Pray with them, and give them blessings as they face the important decisions in their future.

I'm grateful for my sons and my sons-in-law, who have taught me so much, and I pray now that our Heavenly Father will bless all of us as fathers and sons that we will honor our priesthood and that we will love one another by making relationships with each other one of the great, eternal priorities of our lives. I so pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Walter F. González

Powerful priesthood holders

Many years ago a certain group of worthy priesthood holders taught with great power and authority. One of them was so powerful that it was impossible not to believe his words.¹ These priesthood holders helped the people learn about the Savior and His doctrine and helped them find happiness. Their teachings and examples provided a means whereby the people experienced a mighty change of heart. We learn that thousands were led by them to be baptized and make covenants to endure to the end.² I am speaking about the great Book of Mormon missionaries who were powerful priesthood holders.

We can learn a great deal from these children of Lehi. By doing what they did, we can become more powerful in blessing

the lives of our Heavenly Father's sons and daughters, more powerful in serving others, more powerful in rescuing others, and more powerful in becoming more Christlike men.

Power of the Book of Mormon

Alma the Younger teaches us one of the things they did to become so successful: they used the records from which the Book of Mormon was taken. When he gave the record that would eventually become the Book of Mormon to his son Helaman, he taught that without these plates, "Ammon and his brethren could not have convinced so many thousands . . . ; yea, these records and their words brought them unto repentance."³

God showed His power through the plates by fulfilling one purpose, “even . . . the restoration of many thousands . . . to the knowledge of the truth.” Alma then prophesied that God would “still show forth his power in them unto future generations.”⁴ Thus, the records were preserved, and you and I are part of those future generations. Just as in the days of old, we can be more powerful priesthood holders by using the Book of Mormon.

The process of bringing to light the Book of Mormon cannot be compared to any literary work by any author in human history. We could say that it is a book that was shepherded by the very finger of our God. During His visit to the ancient Americas, the Lord asked Nephi to bring the records that they were keeping and place them before Him. Jesus then looked at them and commanded that certain events and passages be added.⁵ “And [the Savior] saith: These scriptures, which ye had not with you, the Father commanded that I should give unto you; for it was wisdom in him that they should be given unto future generations.”⁶ I feel everlasting gratitude to belong to those future generations. I am a member of the Church thanks to the Book of Mormon. I will never forget my feelings when, as a young boy in Uruguay, I read this sacred book for the very first time. I did not have to read much in 1 Nephi to experience such a joy that it cannot be expressed with words. It was as if the book was permeated with the Spirit of the Lord and made me feel closer to God.

This experience added meaning to the statement made by the Prophet Joseph Smith about this book when he declared that “a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book.”⁷ I also recognize the relevance of President Thomas S. Monson’s promise when he said that “as we read the Book of Mormon and the other standard works, as we put the teachings to the test, then we will know of the doctrine, for this is our

promise; we will know whether it be of man or whether it be of God.”⁸

These promises bring us joy now and in our future. Once I received a testimony of the Book of Mormon, the natural feeling that followed was a desire to apply the teachings of the book by making covenants. I made covenants by being baptized and confirmed a member of the Church. These covenants, made through priesthood ordinances, along with knowledge gained from the Book of Mormon changed my life.

It is not surprising that when the Savior visited the ancient Americas, besides teaching doctrine, He gave Nephi and others the power to baptize.⁹ In other words, the doctrine and the ordinances stood side by side. The full application of the teachings of the Book of Mormon does require priesthood ordinances with their associated covenants.

Best-read and best-applied book

There are books that are released to the market and quickly become best sellers. Sometimes they generate so much interest that people eagerly await their release. Such books seem to flood the market right away, and you can see people reading them everywhere. God, in His infinite wisdom, reserved the Book of Mormon for our benefit. Its purpose is not to become a best seller. Nevertheless, we can turn this sacred book into a best-read and best-applied book in our life. Let me suggest three activities that can help us turn the Book of Mormon into the best-read and best-applied book, which will empower us today to become more powerful priesthood holders, even as those in ancient times.

First, feast upon the words of Christ. We must read the Book of Mormon in order to “feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do.”¹⁰ Feasting upon the words of Christ is a unique experience.

When we read and look for principles and doctrines that will help us in our daily lives, we will have a renewed enthusiasm. For example, when the rising generation faces challenges in coping with peer pressure, we can read the book looking specifically for teachings that will help them with this kind of challenge. One of those teachings could be taken from Lemuel's experience. Lemuel made some wrong choices because he yielded to Laman's pressure.¹¹ He did not do the right thing, because he "knew not the dealings of that God who had created them."¹² A principle that we can draw from this incident is that learning doctrine about how God deals with us will help us to cope with peer pressure. The Book of Mormon has more teachings and examples about this topic, and we are the generations who can benefit from the teachings of this book.

Second, apply in our lives all that we learn about Christ. Reading the Book of Mormon and looking for attributes of Christ is a great, edifying experience. For instance, the brother of Jared recognized that the Lord was a God of truth; therefore, He could not lie.¹³ What great hope this attribute brings to my soul! All the promises in the Book of Mormon and the promises given by the living prophets today will be fulfilled because He is God and cannot lie. Even in these turbulent times, we know that things will be OK if we follow the teachings learned from the Book of Mormon and the living prophets. Once we learn about an attribute of Christ, such as the one recognized by the brother of Jared, we should work to implement it in our own life. This will help us to become more powerful priesthood holders.

Third, teach the doctrine and principles found in the sacred pages of the Book of Mormon. We can teach anyone from this book. Can you imagine the additional "convincing power of God"¹⁴ when missionaries and family members quote, read, or repeat by heart the book's very words?

A golden instrument

I remember a mission in Ecuador whose missionaries used the Book of Mormon in all their comings and goings. Because of them, thousands experienced a mighty change of heart and decided to enter into covenants through sacred priesthood ordinances. The Book of Mormon is a golden instrument in finding and converting the honest seekers of truth and in rescuing many of our brothers and sisters back into gospel activity.

I know that families will be fortified by implementing the teachings of this great book in their lives. Many of our children will be saved because they will remember, as Enos did, the words which he had often heard his father speak concerning eternal life, and because of this, he came to know that his sins were forgiven through the Atonement of Christ.¹⁵

You and I, as part of those future generations spoken about, can be more powerful priesthood holders by using the Book of Mormon and honoring our priesthood covenants. The Book of Mormon testifies of Jesus Christ, of whom I also testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See 3 Nephi 7:18.
2. See Alma 23:5–6.
3. Alma 37:9.
4. Alma 37:19.
5. See 3 Nephi 23:6–14.
6. 3 Nephi 26:2.
7. Introduction to the Book of Mormon.
8. Thomas S. Monson, "Decisions Determine Destiny," *New Era*, Nov. 1979, 5.
9. See 3 Nephi 11:18–22.
10. 2 Nephi 32:3.
11. See 1 Nephi 3:28.
12. 1 Nephi 2:12.
13. See Ether 3:12.
14. 3 Nephi 28:29.
15. See Enos 1:3–8.

Elder Yoon Hwan Choi

A group of loud boys

I would like to tell you about a group of loud young men who came into my life when I was a young bishop in Seoul, Korea, many years ago. These were boys who lived in the neighborhood. Only one or two of them were members of the Church at the time. The boys who were members were the only members in their family. They were all friends, and they came to the church to play and to be together. They liked to play Ping-Pong during the weekdays, and they liked to have fun activities on Saturdays. Most of them were not good students in school and were considered by many to be troublemakers.

I was a young father of two sons, who were seven and nine years old at the time. I did not know what I could do for these young men. They were so rowdy that once my wife, Bon-Kyoung, asked me if we could move to another ward so that our sons could see good examples from other young men. I pondered and prayed to Heavenly Father to help me to find the way to help these young men. Finally I made the decision to try and teach them how they could change their lives.

A vision came upon my mind very clearly. I felt that if they were to become missionaries, their lives would be changed. From that moment on, I became very excited, and I tried to spend as much time as possible with them, teaching them the importance of missionary service and how to prepare for a mission.

The Hanaro Quartet

At that time, Elder Seo, a full-time missionary, was transferred to our ward. He was one who had grown up in the Church and as an Aaronic Priesthood youth had participated in a young men's singing group with his friends. He met those boisterous boys in our ward. Elder Seo taught those who were not members the

missionary discussions, and he also taught them the songs he used to sing. He made a triple quartet with those loud boys and named them the Hanaro Quartet, which means "be as one." They were happy to sing together, but we all needed "big" patience when we listened to their singing.

Our home was open to the members anytime they wanted to visit. The boys visited our home almost every weekend and even on some weekdays. We fed them and taught them. We taught them the principles of the gospel as well as the application of the gospel in their lives. We tried to give them a vision of their future life.

They sang together every time they came to our home. Their loud sound hurt our ears. But we always praised them because listening to them sing was far more enjoyable than seeing them get into trouble.

Through the years these activities continued. Most of these young men matured in the gospel, and a *miracle* happened. Over time, nine of the boys who were not members were baptized. They changed from loud, rowdy boys into valiant striping warriors.¹

They served missions, met beautiful young sisters in the Church, and married in the temple. Of course, there were different challenges for each of them as they served missions, attended school, and got married, but they all stayed faithful because they wanted to obey their leaders and please the Lord. Now they have happy families with children born in the covenant.

Nine loud boys have become 45 active members in the Lord's kingdom, including their wives and children. They are now leaders in their wards and stakes. One is a bishop, two serve in bishoprics, one is serving on the high council, and two are Young Men presidents. There is a ward mission leader, an executive secretary, and a seminary teacher. As a group, they still

sing together, and the *other miracle*—they actually sound good!

Obedience and church attendance

There are two basic principles that helped these young men become like the sons of Helaman.² Even though the boys' mothers were not members of the Church and did not understand the words of the Lord, priesthood leaders became like their fathers, and leaders' wives became like their mothers.

These nine boys—I call them the “Boys of the Lord”—learned that they would be blessed when they listened to the Church leaders, even though they didn't always understand why. They became like Adam, our first father, who when he made an offering to the Lord was asked by an angel, “Why dost thou offer sacrifices unto the Lord? And Adam said unto him: I know not, save the Lord commanded me.”³ They became anxious to be obedient and to serve the Lord with their whole hearts.

They also learned that attending their Church meetings was very important. President Ezra Taft Benson said in his speech entitled “To the ‘Youth of the Noble Birthright’”: “May I now direct your attention to the importance of attending all of your Church meetings. Faithful attendance at Church meetings brings blessings you can receive in *no* other way.”⁴ As they attended their Church meetings regularly, the boys felt the great love of the Lord and learned how to apply the doctrines and principles of the Church in their own daily lives. They also learned how to participate in meetings with great joy and happiness.

Setting a righteous example

Now, we have three of our own sons, including our youngest, who was born during the time I served as bishop. As our sons grew, those nine boys became the leaders of the ward and the stake, and they became the teachers and leaders of our sons. They

taught our boys and other boys in the same way I taught them when they were troublemakers. They loved *our* young boys in the same way *I* loved them. *These loud, rowdy boys of the past became our children's heroes.* Our sons liked to follow their great examples of becoming wonderful missionaries and getting married to righteous companions in the temple.

These young men continue to influence our family. Two months ago our ward had a missionary activity on a Saturday evening, inviting everyone, including part-member families. Our youngest son, Sun-Yoon, had just come back from a youth camp in the afternoon of that same day. He said he was not going to the missionary activity because he was not a member of a part-member family and he was so tired. He didn't come to the activity. My wife called him on the phone to explain that everyone was invited to the activity. He said, “I know, but I am not coming today,” and hung up.

Right after the meeting started that evening, Sun-Yoon came in and sat by his mother very quietly. He whispered to her, saying, “Right after I hung up the phone, I remembered asking Dad what made the Hanaro Quartet so successful in their lives. He told me that they obeyed the words of the Church leaders and that they regularly attended the meetings of the Church. That was the key that changed their lives and made them so successful.” My son continued, “All of a sudden, the words of my father came into my mind, and I decided to follow them because I want to have a happy family like theirs and to be successful in my life.”

Loving leadership

Dear brethren, let us love our boys—although some of them are loud boys. Let us teach them to change their lives. Modern sons of Helaman come not only from our precious families within the Church but also from new and young converts who do not have parents in the

gospel. You and your wives are to be their “goodly parents”⁵ until they become like the sons of Helaman.

I am so pleased and happy to see your constant loving leadership for our young boys. These young men are all of our sons. As we reach out to them, lift them, and help them, we will feel like John, who said, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.”⁶

Dear young men, let us obey the leaders of the Church and be like Adam, who didn’t always have to know the reason why but was just happy to be obedient. And please faithfully attend your Church meetings. If you do this, you will learn how to prepare for your future, and you will be successful. To young boys who were born in the Church and also to those who have joined the Church, *you* are the army of the Lord. You will become wonderful missionaries and righteous fathers to your families. Heavenly Father will bless you to have a happy family. You have a bright future in the gospel, and like the sons of Helaman, you will bring eternal joy to all of us.

I love you, and I know that our Heavenly Father loves all of us, so He sent His

Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, as our Redeemer. President Thomas S. Monson is our living prophet, who leads us in the right way. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See Alma 53:20–22.
2. See Alma 56:10.
3. Moses 5:6.
4. Ezra Taft Benson, in Conference Report, Apr. 1986, 56; or *Ensign*, May 1986, 44; italics added.
5. 1 Nephi 1:1.
6. 3 John 1:4.

President Uchtdorf

Thank you, brethren.

The choir and congregation will now sing “Praise to the Man.” After the singing, it will be my privilege to address you. Following my remarks, President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will then speak to us.

The choir and congregation sang
“Praise to the Man.”

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf

Remain steadfast

In our travels visiting Church members throughout the world and by means of established priesthood channels, we receive firsthand feedback on the conditions and challenges of our members. For years many of our members have been affected by worldwide disasters, both natural and man-made. We also understand that families have had to tighten their belts and are concerned about enduring these challenging times.

Brethren, we do feel very close to you. We love you, and we pray always for you. I have seen enough ups and downs

throughout my life to know that winter will surely give way to the warmth and hope of a new spring. I am optimistic about the future. Brethren, for our part, we must remain steadfast in hope, work with all our strength, and trust in God.

Personal growth through adversity

Lately I have been thinking of a time in my life when the weight of worry and concern over an uncertain future seemed ever present. I was 11 years old and living with my family in the attic of a farmhouse near Frankfurt, Germany. We were refugees for the second time in a period of only a few

years, and we were struggling to establish ourselves in a new place far away from our previous home. I could say that we were poor, but that would be an understatement. We all slept in one room that was so tiny there was scarcely space to walk around the beds. In the other small room, we had a few pieces of modest furniture and a stove that Mother used to cook meals on. To get from one room to the other, we had to pass through a storage area where the farmer kept his equipment and tools, along with assorted meats and sausages hanging from the rafters. The aroma always made me very hungry. We had no bathroom, but we did have an outhouse—down the stairs and some 50 feet away, though it seemed much farther during wintertime.

Because I was a refugee and because of my East German accent, other children often made fun of me and called me names that deeply hurt. Of all the times of my youth, I believe this may have been the most discouraging.

Now, decades later, I can look back on those days through the softening filter of experience. Even though I still remember the hurt and despair, I can see now what I was unable to see then: this was a period of great personal growth. During this time, our family bonded together. I watched and learned from my parents. I admired their determination and optimism. From them I learned that adversity, when confronted with faith, courage, and tenacity, could be overcome.

Knowing that some of you are experiencing your own periods of anxiety and despair, I wanted to speak today about two important principles that sustained me through this formative period of my life.

The value of work

The first principle: Work. To this day, I am deeply impressed by the way my family worked after having lost everything following World War II! I remember my father—a civil servant by education and

experience—taking on several difficult jobs, among which were coal miner, uranium miner, mechanic, and truck driver. He left early in the morning and often returned late at night in order to support our family. My mother started a laundry and worked countless hours doing menial labor. She enlisted my sister and me in her business. With my bike I became the pickup and delivery service. It felt good to be able to help the family in a small way, and though I did not know it at the time, the physical labor turned out to be a blessing to my health as well.

It wasn't easy, but the work kept us from dwelling too much on the difficulties of our circumstances. Although our situation didn't change overnight, it did change. That's the thing about work. If we simply keep at it—steady and constant—things certainly will improve.

How I admire men, women, and children who know how to work! How the Lord loves the laborer! He said, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread,"¹ and "The laborer is worthy of his hire."² He also gave a promise: "Thrust in your sickle with all your soul, and your sins are forgiven you."³ Those who are unafraid to roll up their sleeves and lose themselves in the pursuit of worthwhile goals are a blessing to their families, communities, nations, and to the Church.

The Lord doesn't expect us to work harder than we are able. He doesn't (nor should we) compare our efforts to those of others. Our Heavenly Father asks only that we do the best we can—that we work according to our full capacity, however great or small that may be.

Work is an antidote for anxiety, an ointment for sorrow, and a doorway to possibility. Whatever our circumstances in life, my dear brethren, let us do the best we can and cultivate a reputation for excellence in all that we do. Let us set our minds and bodies to the glorious opportunity for work that each new day presents.

When our wagon gets stuck in the mud, God is much more likely to assist the man who gets out to push than the man who merely raises his voice in prayer—no matter how eloquent the oration. President Thomas S. Monson put it this way: “It is not enough to *want* to make the effort and to *say* we’ll make the effort. . . . It’s in the *doing*, not just the *thinking*, that we accomplish our goals. If we constantly put our goals off, we will never see them fulfilled.”⁴

Work can be ennobling and fulfilling, but remember Jacob’s warning not to “spend . . . your labor for that which cannot satisfy.”⁵ If we devote ourselves to the pursuit of worldly wealth and the glitter of public recognition at the expense of our families and our spiritual growth, we will discover soon enough that we have made a fool’s bargain. The righteous work we do within the walls of our homes is most sacred; its benefits are eternal in nature. It cannot be delegated. It is the foundation of our work as priesthood holders.

Remember, we are only temporary travelers in this world. Let us not devote our God-given talents and energies solely to setting earthly anchors, but rather let us spend our days growing spiritual wings. For, as sons of the Most High God, we were created to soar unto new horizons.

Now, a word to us seasoned brethren: retirement is not part of the Lord’s plan of happiness. There is no sabbatical or retirement program from priesthood responsibilities—regardless of age or physical capacity. While the phrase “been there, done that” may work as an excuse to avoid skateboarding, decline the invitation for a motorbike ride, or bypass the spicy curry at the buffet, it is not an acceptable excuse for avoiding covenant responsibilities to consecrate our time, talents, and resources in the work of the kingdom of God.

There may be those who, after many years of Church service, believe they are entitled to a period of rest while others pull the weight. To put it bluntly, brethren,

this sort of thinking is unworthy of a disciple of Christ. A great part of our work on this earth is to endure joyfully to the end—every day of our life.

Now, a word also to our younger brethren of the Melchizedek Priesthood who are pursuing the righteous goals of obtaining an education and finding an eternal spouse. These are the correct goals, my brethren, but remember: working diligently in the Lord’s vineyard will greatly upgrade your résumé and increase the probability for success in both of these worthy endeavors.

Whether you are the youngest deacon or the oldest high priest, there is work to do!

The value of learning

The second principle: Learn. During the difficult economic conditions of post-war Germany, opportunities for education were not as abundant as they are today. But in spite of limited options, I always felt an eagerness to learn. I remember one day, while I was out on my bike delivering laundry, I entered the home of a classmate of mine. In one of the rooms, two small desks were nestled against the wall. What a wonderful sight that was! How fortunate those children were to have desks of their own! I could imagine them sitting with open books studying their lessons and doing their homework. It seemed to me that having a desk of my own would be the most wonderful thing in the world.

I had to wait a long time before that wish was fulfilled. Years later, I got a job at a research institution that had a large library. I remember spending much of my free time in that library. There I could finally sit at a desk—by myself—and drink in the information and knowledge that books provide. How I loved to read and learn! In those days I understood firsthand the words of an old saying: Education is not so much the filling of a bucket as the lighting of a fire.

For members of the Church, education is not merely a good idea—it's a commandment. We are to learn "of things both in heaven and in the earth, and under the earth; things which have been, things which are, things which must shortly come to pass; things which are at home, things which are abroad."⁶

Joseph Smith loved learning, even though he had few opportunities for formal education. In his journals, he spoke happily of days spent in study and often expressed his love of learning.⁷

Joseph taught the Saints that knowledge was a necessary part of our mortal journey, for "a man is saved no faster than he [gains] knowledge,"⁸ and that "whatever principle of intelligence we attain . . . in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection."⁹ During challenging times, it is even more important to learn. The Prophet Joseph taught, "Knowledge does away with darkness, [anxiety] and doubt; for these cannot exist where knowledge is."¹⁰

Brethren, you have a duty to learn as much as you can. Please encourage your families, your quorum members, everyone to learn and become better educated. If formal education is not available, do not allow that to prevent you from acquiring all the knowledge you can. Under such circumstances, the best books, in a sense, can become your "university"—a classroom that is always open and admits all who apply. Strive to increase your knowledge of all that is "virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy."¹¹ Seek knowledge "by study and also by faith."¹² Seek with a humble spirit and contrite heart.¹³ As you apply the spiritual dimension of faith to your study—even of temporal things—you can amplify your intellectual capacity, for "if your eye be single to [God's] glory, your whole [body] shall be filled with light, and . . . [comprehend] all things."¹⁴

In our learning, let us not neglect the fountain of revelation. The scriptures and

the words of modern-day apostles and prophets are the sources of wisdom, divine knowledge, and personal revelation to help us find answers to all the challenges in life. Let us learn of Christ; let us seek out that knowledge which leads to peace, truth, and the sublime mysteries of eternity.¹⁵

Conclusion

Brethren, I think back on that 11-year-old boy in Frankfurt, Germany, who worried about his future and felt the lasting sting of unkind remarks. I remember this time with a sort of sad fondness. While I would not be eager to relive those days of trial and trouble, I have little doubt that the lessons I learned were a necessary preparation for future opportunity. Now, many years later, I know this for a certainty: it is often in the trial of adversity that we learn those most critical lessons that form our character and shape our destiny.

I pray that during the coming months and years we can fill our hours and days with righteous work. I pray that we will seek to learn and improve our minds and hearts by drinking deeply from the pure fountains of truth. I leave you my love and blessings in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Genesis 3:19.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 84:79.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 31:5.
4. Thomas S. Monson, in Conference Report, Oct. 2007, 63–64; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 59; italics in original.
5. 2 Nephi 9:51.
6. See Doctrine and Covenants 88:79–80.
7. See Dean C. Jessee, Mark Ashurst-McGee, and Richard L. Jensen, eds., *Journals, Volume 1: 1832–1839*, vol. 1 of the Journals series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, ed. Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (2008), 84, 135, 164.
8. Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 4:588.

9. See Doctrine and Covenants 130:18–19.
10. Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 5:340.
11. Articles of Faith 1:13.

12. Doctrine and Covenants 109:7.
13. See Doctrine and Covenants 136:33.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 88:67.
15. See Doctrine and Covenants 42:61.

President Henry B. Eyring

Ready to answer the call

Wherever I am in the day or night, there is nearby a small container of olive oil. This is the one which I keep in the middle drawer of the desk where I work. There is one in my pocket when I am working outdoors or traveling. There is also one in the kitchen cabinet in my home.

The one I hold now has a date on it. It is the day when someone exercised the power of the priesthood to consecrate the pure oil for the healing of the sick. The young men of the Aaronic Priesthood and even their fathers might think that I am a little extreme in my preparation.

But the call during the day or the knock at the door at night always comes as a surprise. Someone will say, “Please, could you come quickly?” Once, years ago, it was a father calling from a hospital. His three-year-old daughter had been thrown 50 feet by a speeding car as she ran across the street to join her mother. When I arrived at the hospital, the father pled that the power of the priesthood would preserve her life. The doctors and the nurses only reluctantly let us reach through a plastic barrier to place a drop of oil on the one opening in the heavy bandages which covered her head. A doctor said to me, with irritation in his voice, “Hurry with whatever you are going to do. She is dying.”

He was wrong. She lived, and contrary to what the doctor had said, she not only lived, but she learned to walk again.

When the call came, I was ready. The preparation was far more than having consecrated oil close at hand. It must begin long before the crisis which requires

priesthood power. Those who are prepared will be ready to answer.

Preparing to do the Lord’s will

The preparation begins in families, in Aaronic Priesthood quorums, and mostly in the private lives of young men. The quorums and the families must help, but the preparation that counts will be made by the young men making choices to rise to their great destiny as priesthood servants for God.

The destiny of the rising generation of priesthood holders is far more than to be ready to bring God’s power down to heal the sick. The preparation is to be ready to go and do whatever the Lord wants done as the world is preparing for His coming. None of us knows exactly what those errands will be. But we know what it will take to be ready, so each of us can prepare.

What you will need in the dramatic moment will be built in the steady performance of obedient service. I will tell you two of the things you will need and the preparation it takes to be ready.

Building faith now for days ahead

The first is to have faith. The priesthood is the authority to act in the name of God. It is the right to call down the powers of heaven. So you must have faith that God lives and that you have won His confidence to allow you to use His power for His purposes.

An instance from the Book of Mormon will help you see how one man made that preparation. There was a priesthood holder

named Nephi who received a hard assignment from the Lord. He was sent by God to call wicked people to repentance before it was too late for them. In their wickedness and hatred, they were killing each other. Even their sorrow had not humbled them enough to repent and obey God.

Because of Nephi's preparation, God blessed him with power to fulfill his assignment. In His loving and empowering words to Nephi, there is a guide for us:

"Blessed art thou, Nephi, for those things which thou hast done; for I have beheld how thou hast with unweariness declared the word, which I have given unto thee, unto this people. And thou hast not feared them, and hast not sought thine own life, but hast sought my will, and to keep my commandments.

"And now, because thou hast done this with such unweariness, behold, I will bless thee forever; and I will make thee mighty in word and in deed, in faith and in works; yea, even that all things shall be done unto thee according to thy word, for thou shalt not ask that which is contrary to my will.

"Behold, thou art Nephi, and I am God. Behold, I declare it unto thee in the presence of mine angels, that ye shall have power over this people, and shall smite the earth with famine, and with pestilence, and destruction, according to the wickedness of this people.

"Behold, I give unto you power, that whatsoever ye shall seal on earth shall be sealed in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven; and thus shall ye have power among this people."¹

As the account from the Book of Mormon tells us, the people did not repent. So Nephi asked God to change the seasons. He asked for a miracle to help the people choose to repent because of famine. The famine came. The people repented, and then they begged Nephi to have God send rain. He did ask God, and God honored his unshakable faith.

That faith did not come in the moment when Nephi needed it, nor did God's trust in Nephi. He earned that great faith and God's confidence by courageous and sustained labor in the Lord's service. You young men are building that faith now for the days ahead when you will need it.

It may be so small a thing as to keep careful minutes in a deacons or a teachers quorum. There were young men years ago who kept meticulous records of what was decided and what was done by boys only months older than they were. That took faith that God called even 12-year-olds into His service who were being guided by revelation. Some of those quorum secretaries of long ago now sit in the presiding councils of the Church. They now read the minutes others prepare. And revelation flows to them now as it did to the leaders they served when they were boys like you. They had been prepared to trust that God reveals His *will*, even in apparently small matters, in His kingdom.

Following inspiration

Now, the Lord said Nephi could be trusted because he would ask nothing contrary to God's will. To have that confidence in Nephi, the Lord had to be sure that Nephi believed in revelation, sought it, and followed it. Long experience following inspiration from God was a part of Nephi's priesthood preparation. It must be part of yours.

I see that happening today. In recent months I have heard deacons, teachers, and priests give talks which are clearly as inspired and powerful as you will hear in this general conference. As I have felt the power being given to young holders of the priesthood, I have thought that the rising generation is rising around us, as if on an incoming tide. My prayer is that those of us in the generations which have come before will rise on the tide with them. The preparation of the Aaronic Priesthood is a blessing to us all as well as to those they

will serve in their generation and the generations to follow.

Yet all is not perfect in Zion. Not all of the youth choose to prepare. That choice must be their own. They are responsible for themselves. That is the Lord's way in His loving plan. But many young men have little or no support from those who could help as they prepare. Those of us who can help will be held accountable by the Lord. A father who neglects or interferes with a son's development of faith or his ability to follow inspiration will someday know sorrow. That will be true for anyone placed in a position to help these young men choose wisely and well in their days in the preparatory priesthood.

Leading young men by example

Now, the second thing they will need is confidence that they can live up to the blessings and the trust which God has offered them. Most of the influences around them drag them down to doubt the existence of God, of His love for them, and of the reality of the sometimes quiet messages they receive through the Holy Ghost and the Spirit of Christ. Their peers may urge them to choose sin. If young men choose sin, those messages from God will become more faint.

We can help them choose to prepare by loving them, warning them, and by showing confidence in them. But we can help them even more by our example of a faithful and inspired servant. In our families, in quorums, in classes, and as we associate with them in any setting, we can act as true priesthood holders who use its power as God has taught us.

For me, that instruction is most clear in the 121st section of the Doctrine and Covenants. The Lord warns us in that section to have our motives pure: "No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned."²

As we lead and influence young men, we must never do it to gratify our pride or our ambition. We must never use compulsion in any degree of unrighteousness. That is a high standard of the example we must set for our youth.

Examples of righteous leadership

I saw it done when I was a teacher and a priest. My bishop and those who served under him were determined not to lose even one of us. As nearly as I could see, their determination was motivated by love for the Lord and for us, not for any selfish purpose.

The bishop had a system. Every adviser of every quorum was to contact every young man he had not spoken to that Sunday. They were not to go to bed until they had either talked to the boy who had been missing, to his parents, or to a close friend. The bishop promised them that he would not turn out his light until he had heard a report about every boy. I don't think he gave them an order. He simply made it clear that he did not expect their lights to go out until they had given that report.

He and those who served under him were doing far more than watching over us. They were showing us by example what it means to care for the Lord's sheep. No effort was too much for him or for those who served us in our quorums. By their example, they taught us what it means to be unwearied in the Lord's service. The Lord was preparing us by example.

I have no idea whether they thought any one of us was going to be anything special. But they treated us as if they did by being willing to pay any personal price to keep us from losing faith.

I don't know how the bishop got so many people to have such high expectations. As nearly as I can tell, it was done "by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned." The "no lights out" method

the bishop used would not work in some places. But the example of unwavering care for every young man and reaching out quickly brought the power of heaven into our lives. It always will. It helped young men prepare for the days when God needed them in families and in His kingdom.

My father was an example for me of what the Lord teaches in the 121st section about getting heaven's help in preparing young men. During my early years, he was sometimes disappointed by my performance. He let me know it. Hearing his voice, I could feel he thought I was better than that. But he did it in the Lord's way: "Reproving betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reproofed, lest he esteem thee to be his enemy."³

I knew, even after the most direct correction, that Dad's reproof was given in love. In fact, his love seemed to increase when he used even his strongest correction, which was a disapproving and disappointed look. He was my leader and my trainer, never using compulsory means, and I am sure that the promise given in the Doctrine and Covenants will be fulfilled for him. His influence on me will flow unto him "forever and ever."⁴

Doing more to help young men prepare

Many fathers and leaders, when they hear the words of the 121st section of the Doctrine and Covenants, will feel that they must rise higher to come up to that standard. I do. Can you remember a moment when you rebuked a child or youth with sharpness when you were moved by something other than inspiration? Can you remember a time when you told a son to do something or make a sacrifice you were not willing to do or make yourself? Those feelings of regret can spur us to repentance to become more nearly the examples we have covenanted to be.

As we meet our obligations as fathers and leaders, we will help the next generation rise to their glorious future. They will be better than we are, just as you have tried to be even better parents than your parents and better leaders than the great ones who helped you.

It is my prayer that we will be determined to do better every day to prepare the rising generation. Each time I see a bottle of consecrated oil, I will remember this night and the feeling I have now of wanting to do more to help young men prepare for their days of service and opportunity. I pray for a blessing of preparation for them. I am confident that, with the Lord's help and ours, they will be ready.

I bear you my witness that God the Father lives and that Jesus Christ lives and leads this Church. He is the perfect exemplar of the priesthood. President Thomas S. Monson holds and exercises all the keys of the priesthood on the earth. That is true. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Helaman 10:4–7.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 121:41.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 121:43.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 121:46.

President Uchtdorf

Brethren, we remind you that the Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be tomorrow morning from 9:30 to 10:00 mountain daylight time. The Sunday morning session will immediately follow.

We express appreciation to the choir for the beautiful music they have provided and also thank the brethren who have addressed us this evening.

It will now be our privilege to listen to our beloved prophet, President Thomas S. Monson. Following President Monson's remarks, the choir will sing "Rise Up, O Men of God." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Lance B. Wickman of the Seventy.

President Thomas S. Monson

Brethren, we are assembled as a mighty body of the priesthood, both here in the Conference Center and in locations throughout the world. We have heard inspired messages this evening, and I express my appreciation to those brethren who have addressed us. I am honored, yet humbled, by the privilege to speak to you, and I pray that the inspiration of the Lord may attend me.

“Cease from anger”

Recently as I watched the news on television, I realized that many of the lead stories were similar in nature in that the tragedies reported all basically traced back to one emotion: *anger*. The father of an infant had been arrested for physical abuse of the baby. It was alleged that the baby’s crying had so infuriated him that he had broken one of the child’s limbs and several ribs. Alarming was the report of growing gang violence, with the number of gang-related killings having risen sharply. Another story that night involved the shooting of a woman by her estranged husband, who was reportedly in a jealous rage after finding her with another man. Then, of course, there was the usual coverage of wars and conflicts throughout the world.

I thought of the words of the Psalmist: “Cease from anger, and forsake wrath.”¹

A family tragedy

Many years ago, a young couple called my office and asked if they could come in for counseling. They indicated they had suffered a tragedy in their lives and that their marriage was in serious jeopardy. An appointment was arranged.

The tension between this husband and wife was apparent as they entered my office. Their story unfolded slowly at first as the husband spoke haltingly and the wife cried quietly and participated very little in the conversation.

The young man had returned from serving a mission and was accepted to a prestigious university in the eastern part of the United States. It was there, in a university ward, that he had met his future wife. She was also a student at the university. After a year of dating, they journeyed to Utah and were married in the Salt Lake Temple, returning east shortly afterward to finish their schooling.

By the time they graduated and returned to their home state, they were expecting their first child and the husband had employment in his chosen field. The wife gave birth to a baby boy. Life was good.

When their son was about 18 months old, they decided to take a short vacation to visit family members who lived a few hundred miles away. This was at a time when car seats for children and seat belts for adults were scarcely heard of, let alone used. The three members of the family all rode in the front seat with the toddler in the middle.

Sometime during the trip, the husband and wife had a disagreement. After all these years, I cannot recall what caused it. But I do remember that their argument escalated and became so heated that they were eventually yelling at one another. Understandably, this caused their young son to begin crying, which the husband said only added to his anger. Losing total control of his temper, he picked up a toy the child had dropped on the seat and flung it in the direction of his wife.

He missed hitting his wife. Instead, the toy struck their son, with the result that he was brain damaged and would be handicapped for the rest of his life.

This was one of the most tragic situations I had ever encountered. I counseled and encouraged them. We talked of commitment and responsibility, of acceptance and forgiveness. We spoke of the affection and respect which needed to return to their family. We read words of comfort from the

scriptures. We prayed together. Though I have not heard from them since that day so long ago, they were smiling through their tears as they left my office. All these years I've hoped they made the decision to remain together, comforted and blessed by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I think of them whenever I read the words: "Anger doesn't solve anything. It builds nothing, but it can destroy everything."²

Anger is a choice

We've all felt anger. It can come when things don't turn out the way we want. It might be a reaction to something which is said of us or to us. We may experience it when people don't behave the way we want them to behave. Perhaps it comes when we have to wait for something longer than we expected. We might feel angry when others can't see things from our perspective. There seem to be countless possible reasons for anger.

There are times when we can become upset at imagined hurts or perceived injustices. President Heber J. Grant, seventh President of the Church, told of a time as a young adult when he did some work for a man who then sent him a check for \$500 with a letter apologizing for not being able to pay him more. Then President Grant did some work for another man—work which he said was 10 times more difficult, involving 10 times more labor and a great deal more time. This second man sent him a check for \$150. Young Heber felt he had been treated most unfairly. He was at first insulted and then incensed.

He recounted the experience to an older friend, who asked, "Did that man intend to insult you?"

President Grant replied, "No. He told my friends he had rewarded me handsomely."

To this the older friend replied, "A man's a fool who takes an insult that isn't intended."³

The Apostle Paul asks in Ephesians, chapter 4, verse 26 of the Joseph Smith Translation: "Can ye be angry, and not sin? let not the sun go down upon your wrath." I ask, is it possible to feel the Spirit of our Heavenly Father when we are angry? I know of no instance where such would be the case.

From 3 Nephi in the Book of Mormon, we read:

"There shall be no disputations among you. . . .

"For verily, verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another.

"Behold, this is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger, one against another; but this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away."⁴

To be angry is to yield to the influence of Satan. No one can *make* us angry. It is our choice. If we desire to have a proper spirit with us at all times, we must choose to refrain from becoming angry. I testify that such is possible.

Anger, Satan's tool, is destructive in so many ways.

Story of Thomas B. Marsh

I believe most of us are familiar with the sad account of Thomas B. Marsh and his wife, Elizabeth. Brother Marsh was one of the first modern-day Apostles called after the Church was restored to the earth. He eventually became President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

While the Saints were in Far West, Missouri, Elizabeth Marsh, Thomas's wife, and her friend Sister Harris decided they would exchange milk in order to make more cheese than they otherwise could. To be certain all was done fairly, they agreed that they should not save what were called the strippings, but that the milk and strippings should all go together. Strippings

came at the end of the milking and were richer in cream.

Sister Harris was faithful to the agreement, but Sister Marsh, desiring to make some especially delicious cheese, saved a pint of strippings from each cow and sent Sister Harris the milk without the strippings. This caused the two women to quarrel. When they could not settle their differences, the matter was referred to the home teachers to settle. They found Elizabeth Marsh guilty of failure to keep her agreement. She and her husband were upset with the decision, and the matter was then referred to the bishop for a Church trial. The bishop's court decided that the strippings were wrongfully saved and that Sister Marsh had violated her covenant with Sister Harris.

Thomas Marsh appealed to the high council, and the men comprising this council confirmed the bishop's decision. He then appealed to the First Presidency of the Church. Joseph Smith and his counselors considered the case and upheld the decision of the high council.

Elder Thomas B. Marsh, who sided with his wife through all of this, became angrier with each successive decision—so angry, in fact, that he went before a magistrate and swore that the Mormons were hostile toward the state of Missouri. His affidavit led to—or at least was a factor in—Governor Lilburn Boggs's cruel extermination order, which resulted in over 15,000 Saints being driven from their homes, with all the terrible suffering and consequent death that followed. All of this occurred because of a disagreement over the exchange of milk and cream.⁵

After 19 years of rancor and loss, Thomas B. Marsh made his way to the Salt Lake Valley and asked President Brigham Young for forgiveness. Brother Marsh also wrote to Heber C. Kimball, First Counselor in the First Presidency, of the lesson he had learned. Said Brother Marsh: "The Lord could get along very well without me and He . . . lost nothing by my falling out of

the ranks; But O what have I lost?! Riches, greater riches than all this world or many planets like this could afford."⁶

Apropos are the words of the poet John Greenleaf Whittier: "Of all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are these: 'It might have been!'"⁷

Refrain from anger

My brethren, we are all susceptible to those feelings which, if left unchecked, can lead to anger. We experience displeasure or irritation or antagonism, and if we so choose, we lose our temper and become angry with others. Ironically, those others are often members of our own families—the people we really love the most.

Many years ago I read the following Associated Press dispatch which appeared in the newspaper: An elderly man disclosed at the funeral of his brother, with whom he had shared, from early manhood, a small, one-room cabin near Canisteo, New York, that following a quarrel, they had divided the room in half with a chalk line, and neither had crossed the line or spoken a word to the other since that day—62 years before. Just think of the consequence of that anger. What a tragedy!

May we make a conscious decision, each time such a decision must be made, to refrain from anger and to leave unsaid the harsh and hurtful things we may be tempted to say.

I love the words of the hymn written by Elder Charles W. Penrose, who served in the Quorum of the Twelve and in the First Presidency during the early years of the 20th century:

School thy feelings, O my brother;
Train thy warm, impulsive soul.
Do not its emotions smother,
But let wisdom's voice control.
School thy feelings; there is power
In the cool, collected mind.
Passion shatters reason's tower,
Makes the clearest vision blind.⁸

Oath and covenant of the priesthood

Each of us is a holder of the priesthood of God. The oath and covenant of the priesthood pertains to all of us. To those who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood, it is a declaration of our requirement to be faithful and obedient to the laws of God and to magnify the callings which come to us. To those who hold the Aaronic Priesthood, it is a pronouncement concerning future duty and responsibility, that you may prepare yourselves here and now.

This oath and covenant is set forth by the Lord in these words:

“For whoso is faithful unto the obtaining these two priesthoods of which I have spoken, and the magnifying their calling, are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies.

“They become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham, and the church and kingdom, and the elect of God.

“And also all they who receive this priesthood receive me, saith the Lord;

“For he that receiveth my servants receiveth me;

“And he that receiveth me receiveth my Father;

“And he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father’s kingdom; therefore all that my Father hath shall be given unto him.”⁹

Brethren, great promises await us if we are true and faithful to the oath and covenant of this precious priesthood which we hold. May we be worthy sons of our Heavenly Father. May we ever be exemplary in our homes and faithful in keeping

all of the commandments, that we may harbor no animosity toward any man but rather be peacemakers, ever remembering the Savior’s admonition, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”¹⁰ This is my plea tonight at the conclusion of this great priesthood meeting, and it’s also my humble and sincere prayer, for I love you, brethren, with all my heart and soul. And I pray our Heavenly Father’s blessing to attend each of you in your life, in your home, in your heart, in your soul, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Psalm 37:8.
2. Lawrence Douglas Wilder, quoted in “Early Hardships Shaped Candidates,” *Deseret News*, Dec. 7, 1991, A2.
3. See Heber J. Grant, *Gospel Standards*, comp. G. Homer Durham (1941), 288–89.
4. 3 Nephi 11:28–30.
5. See George A. Smith, *Deseret News*, Apr. 16, 1856, 44.
6. Thomas B. Marsh to Heber C. Kimball, May 5, 1857, Brigham Young Collection, Church History Library.
7. “Maud Muller,” *The Complete Poetical Works of John Greenleaf Whittier* (1876), 206.
8. “School Thy Feelings,” *Hymns*, no. 336.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 84:33–38.
10. John 13:35.

The choir sang “Rise Up, O Men of God.”

Elder Lance B. Wickman offered the benediction.

SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth session of the 179th Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 10:00 on Sunday, October 4, 2009. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music. Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and Richard Elliott and Andrew Unsworth were the organists. The choir sang “Sing Praise to Him” to begin the session. President Monson then made the following remarks.

President Thomas S. Monson

Brothers and sisters, we welcome you this morning to the fourth session of the 179th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, the Internet, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners and operators of the many facilities who are broadcasting this conference.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction

of Mack Wilberg, with Richard Elliott and Andrew Unsworth at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing “Sing Praise to Him” and will now favor us with “I Need Thee Every Hour.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Glenn L. Pace of the Seventy. The choir will then sing “Beautiful Zion, Built Above.”

The choir sang “I Need Thee Every Hour.”

Elder Glenn L. Pace offered the invocation.

The choir sang “Beautiful Zion, Built Above.”

President Monson

We shall now be pleased to hear from President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency. He will be followed by Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, after which we shall hear from Bishop H. David Burton, Presiding Bishop of the Church.

President Henry B. Eyring

The Savior is our perfect example

I feel blessed to have the opportunity to speak with you on this Sabbath day. Different as we are in circumstances and experiences, we share a desire to become better than we are. There may be a few who mistakenly feel they are good enough and a few who have given up trying to be better. But, for all, the message of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ is that we can and must expect to become better as long as we live.

Part of that expectation is set for us in a revelation given by God to the Prophet

Joseph Smith. It describes the day when we will meet the Savior, as we all will. It tells us what to do to prepare and what to expect.

It is in the book of Moroni: “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; that ye may become the sons of God; that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; that we may have this hope; that we may be purified even as he is pure. Amen.”¹

That ought to help you understand why any believing Latter-day Saint is an optimist about what lies ahead for him or her, however difficult the present may be. We believe that through living the gospel of Jesus Christ we can become like the Savior, who is perfect. Considering the attributes of Jesus Christ should quash the pride of the self-satisfied person who thinks he or she has no need to improve. And even the most humble person can take hope in the invitation to become like the Savior.

“I’m trying to be like Jesus”

How that wonderful transformation will happen is captured for me in a song written for children. I remember watching the faces of a room full of children singing it on a Sunday. Each of the children was leaning forward, almost to the front of the chair. I could see light in their eyes and determination in their faces as they sang with gusto. You may have heard the song too. I hope it will sound forever in our memories. I only hope I can give it the feeling those children had.

I’m trying to be like Jesus; I’m following in his ways.

I’m trying to love as he did, in all that I do and say.

At times I am tempted to make a wrong choice,

But I try to listen as the still small voice whispers,

“Love one another as Jesus loves you. Try to show kindness in all that you do.

Be gentle and loving in deed and in thought,

For these are the things Jesus taught.”²

It seemed to me that they were not just singing; they were declaring their determination. Jesus Christ was their example. To be like Him was their fixed goal. And their eager looks and their shining eyes convinced me that they had no doubts. They expected to succeed. They believed that

the instruction of the Savior to be perfect was not a hope but a command. And they were sure He had prepared the way.

That determination and confidence can and must be in the heart of every Latter-day Saint. The Savior has prepared the way through His Atonement and His example. And even the children who sang that song knew how.

Family as the setting to learn love

Love is the motivating principle by which the Lord leads us along the way towards becoming like Him, *our perfect example*. Our way of life, hour by hour, must be filled with the love of God and love for others. There is no surprise in that, since the Lord proclaimed those as the first and great commandments. It is love of God that will lead us to keep His commandments. And love of others is at the heart of our capacity to obey Him.

Just as Jesus used a child in His mortal ministry as an example for the people of the pure love they must and could have to be like Him, He has offered us the family as an example of an ideal setting in which we can learn how to love as He loves.

That is because the greatest joys and the greatest sorrows we experience are in family relationships. The joys come from putting the welfare of others above our own. That is what love is. And the sorrow comes primarily from selfishness, which is the absence of love. The ideal God holds for us is to form families in the way most likely to lead to happiness and away from sorrow. A man and a woman are to make sacred covenants that they will put the welfare and happiness of the other at the center of their lives. Children are to be born into a family where the parents hold the needs of children equal to their own in importance. And children are to love parents and each other.

That is the ideal of a loving family. In many of our homes, there are the words “Our Family Can Be Together Forever.”

There is a gravestone near my home of a mother and grandmother. She and her husband were sealed in the temple of God to each other and to their posterity for time and all eternity. The inscription on the gravestone reads, "Please, no empty chairs." She asked for that inscription because she knew that whether the family will be together depends on the choices each family member makes. The word "please" is there because neither God nor she can compel another to choose happiness. And there is Satan, who wants misery, not happiness, in families in this life and in the next.

Counsel for families

My hope today is to suggest some choices which may seem difficult but that would assure you that you have qualified for there to be no empty chairs in your family in the world to come.

To husbands and wives

First, I give counsel to husbands and wives. Pray for the love which allows you to see the good in your companion. Pray for the love that makes weaknesses and mistakes seem small. Pray for the love to make your companion's joy your own. Pray for the love to want to lessen the load and soften the sorrows of your companion.

I saw this in my parents' marriage. In my mother's final illness, the more uncomfortable she became, the more giving her comfort became the dominant intent of my father's life. He asked that the hospital set up a bed in her room. He was determined to be there to be sure that she wanted for nothing. He walked the miles to work each morning and back to her side at night through those difficult times for her. I believe it was a gift from God to him that his power to love grew when it mattered so much to her. I think he was doing what Jesus would have done out of love.

To parents of a wandering child

Now I give counsel to the parents of a wandering child. The Savior is the perfect example of persisting in love. You remember His words of comfort to the people among the Nephites who had rejected His earlier invitation to come to Him. He spoke to the survivors of the destruction which came after His Crucifixion: "O ye house of Israel whom I have spared, how oft will I gather you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, if ye will repent and return unto me with full purpose of heart."³

The story of the prodigal son gives us all hope. The prodigal remembered home, as will your children. They will feel your love drawing them back to you. Elder Orson F. Whitney, in a general conference of 1929, gave a remarkable promise, which I know is true, to the faithful parents who honor the temple sealing to their children: "Though some of the sheep may wander, the eye of the Shepherd is upon them, and sooner or later they will feel the tentacles of Divine Providence reaching out after them and drawing them back to the fold."

Then he goes on to say: "Pray for your careless and disobedient children; hold on to them with your faith. Hope on, trust on, till you see the salvation of God."⁴ You can pray for your children, love them, and reach out to them with confidence that Jesus reaches for them with you. When you keep trying, you are doing what Jesus does.

To children

Now, here is my counsel to children. The Lord gave you a commandment with a promise: "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."⁵ It is the only one of the Ten Commandments with a promise. You may not have parents that are living. In some cases, you may not feel that your parents are worthy of the

honor and respect of their children. You may not even have ever known them. But you owe them life. And in every case, even if your life is not lengthened, its quality will be improved simply by remembering your parents with honor.

To family friends

Now to those who have adopted other people's families as if they were their own: I have friends who remember my children's birthdays better than I do. My wife and I have had friends who seldom failed to visit or to remember a holiday with us. I often am touched when someone begins a conversation, "How is your family?" and then waits to hear the answer with love showing in their face. They seem attentive when I go through a description of the life of each of my children. Their love helps me to feel more keenly the love of the Savior for our children. In their question, I can sense that they are feeling what Jesus feels and asking what He would ask.

Childlike obedience brings peace

For all of us it may be hard to see in our lives an increasing power to love and to see ourselves becoming more like the Savior, *our perfect example*. I wish to encourage you. You have had evidences that you are moving along the road to becoming more like Jesus. It will help to remember how you have felt, at times, like a little child, even in the midst of cares and trials. Think of those children singing the song. Think of the times you felt, perhaps recently, as those little children did singing, "I'm trying to be like Jesus; I'm following in his ways." You will remember that Jesus asked His disciples to bring the children to Him and said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, . . . for of such is the kingdom of God."⁶ You have felt the peace of a pure little child at times when you have tried to be like Jesus.

It may have come when you were baptized. He did not need baptism, because

He was pure. But when you were baptized, you had the feeling of being washed clean, like a little child. When He was baptized, the heavens were opened, and He heard the voice of His Heavenly Father: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."⁷ You heard no voice, but you felt the approval of Heavenly Father for having done what Jesus did.

You have felt it in your family when you asked the pardon of your spouse or forgave a child for some mistake or disobedience. These moments will come more often as you try to do the things you know Jesus would do. Because of His Atonement for you, your childlike obedience will bring a feeling of love of the Savior for you and your love for Him. That is one of the gifts that is promised to His faithful disciples. And this gift can come not only to you alone but also to the loving members of your family. The promise was given in 3 Nephi: "And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children."⁸

I hope you will go out today looking for opportunities to do as He did and to love as He loves. I can promise you the peace that you felt as a child will come to you often and it will linger with you. The promise is true that He made to His disciples: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you."⁹

None of us is perfect yet. But we can have frequent assurance that we are following along the way. He leads us, and He beckons for us to follow Him.

I testify that the way lies in faith in Jesus Christ, in baptism, in receiving the Holy Ghost, and in enduring in love to keep His commandments. I testify that the Father lives and loves us. He loves His Beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is *our perfect example*. Joseph Smith was the prophet of the Restoration. He saw the Father and the Son. I know that is true. There is in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints the priesthood power to

offer the ordinances that allow us to become better and better and more like the Savior and our Heavenly Father. I leave you my blessing that you may feel the assurance and the approval you felt as a little child. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Moroni 7:48.
2. "I'm Trying to Be like Jesus," *Children's Songbook*, 78–79.
3. 3 Nephi 10:6.
4. Orson F. Whitney, in Conference Report, Apr. 1929, 110.
5. Mosiah 13:20.
6. Mark 10:14.
7. Matthew 3:17.
8. 3 Nephi 22:13.
9. John 14:27.

Elder L. Tom Perry

Our pioneer heritage

My wife and I had the privilege of attending the Mormon Miracle Pageant in Manti, Utah, this summer. One night, before the beginning of the pageant, we spoke to the cast members. Because of the large number of cast members, we had to speak to them in two sessions. The pageant had a cast of over 800 individuals, with 570 of them being under the age of 18. One hundred additional cast members participated this year, requiring the sisters in charge of the wardrobe to come up with additional costumes—which they did. It was an inspiration to see how well organized they were in taking care of every detail.

The setting of the pageant is on a beautiful hillside just below the Manti Temple. There were 15,000 people in attendance the night we watched the pageant. It was a thrill to see this army of young men and women catch the vision of the story of the Restoration as they performed their parts with such enthusiasm and spirit.

Something we love to do when we visit Manti is to attend a temple session. There is a special spirit in these older temples, which were constructed at great sacrifice by the early pioneers.

Attending a temple session in the Manti Temple was an emotional experience for me. It brought back great memories of how I remembered the Logan Utah Temple before it was remodeled and modernized. As

we progressed through the temple session, I could hear in every room those early pioneers saying, "Look at what we built with our own hands. We had no power equipment. No contractors or subcontractors were involved in the construction, no fancy cranes to lift up the heavy stones. We performed this labor under our own power."

What a glorious heritage these early Sanpete County pioneers have left to us.

"The past way of facing the future"

Former United States president Ronald Reagan has been quoted as saying, "I do not want to go back to the past; I want to go back to the past way of facing the future."¹ His counsel still resonates within me. There is something about reviewing the lessons of the past to prepare us to face the challenges of the future. What a glorious legacy of faith, courage, and ingenuity those noble early Mormon pioneers have left for us to build upon. My admiration for them deepens the longer I live.

Embracing the gospel resulted in a complete change of life for them. They left everything behind—their homes, their businesses, their farms, and even their beloved family members—to journey into a wilderness. It must have been a real shock when Brigham Young announced, "This is the . . . place."² Before them was a vast desert wasteland, barren of green

hills, trees, and beautiful meadows which most of those early pioneers had known. With firm faith in God and their leaders, the early pioneers went to work to create beautiful communities in the shadows of the mountains.

Many weary pioneers had just started to enjoy some of the modest comforts of life when Brigham Young called them to leave their homes again and journey to the east, to the west, to the north, and to the south to colonize the Great Basin. This is how the communities of Sanpete County—Fairview, Ephraim, Manti, Moroni, and Mount Pleasant—were established.

Building of the Manti Temple

Upon my return from my visit to Sanpete County, I felt the desire to learn more about its early pioneers. I decided to spend a few hours in the new Church History Library and read a little about their history.

It was in the year 1849, just two years after they had arrived in the Salt Lake Valley, when Brigham Young, the great colonizer of the West, called a group of Saints to journey south and start building their homes and communities all over again in another desert wasteland. A short time after they had settled in Sanpete, President Heber C. Kimball, a counselor to President Brigham Young, visited the Manti community and promised them that on the hill overlooking the valley, a temple would be built using stone from the mountains to the east.

Some years passed after the visit of President Kimball, and the citizens began to be anxious that nothing was being done to construct a temple for their use. “We must have a temple in our community,” declared one of the citizens. “We have waited long enough for this blessing.” Another one said, “If we are going to have a temple, we had better get busy and build it.” And that is just what they did.

The cornerstone was laid on April 14, 1879, some 30 years after they had arrived

in the Sanpete Valley. There are many stories that could be told about the diligence of the workmen, who put their very best into the construction of this beautiful temple. President Gordon B. Hinckley said several years ago at the rededication of the Manti Temple, “I have been in the world’s great buildings, and in none of these have I had the feeling I get in coming to these pioneer houses of God.”³ The Hinckley family has a very special connection with the Manti Temple. Sister Marjorie Hinckley’s grandfather lost his life from an injury sustained in its construction.

Shipbuilding and true principles

To better understand how the past can provide a better way of facing the future, I would like to share an account from the building of the Manti Temple. Then I want to share what it has taught me about true principles.

Some fine carpenters from Norway who arrived and settled in Manti were given the assignment of building the roof for the temple. They had never built a roof structure before, but they had experience as shipbuilders. They didn’t know how they would design a roof. Then the thought came to them: “Why don’t we just build a ship? Then, because a well-built ship is solid and secure, if we turn the plans upside down, we’ll have a secure roof.” They set about to plan to construct a ship, and when it was completed, they turned the plan upside down and it became the plan for the roof of the Manti Temple.

In this case they used lessons from their past experience—the principles of shipbuilding—to help them meet the challenge. They correctly reasoned that the same principles they had applied to building a seaworthy vessel would also apply to building a solid roof. For example, both structures needed to be waterproof. The basic integrity of the structure wouldn’t be affected by its orientation—whether right side up or upside down. The most important thing was to have a working

knowledge of the basic principles required to erect any structure that was built to last.

Embedded in the gospel of Jesus Christ there are eternal principles and truths that will last far longer than the principles of building ships and roofs. You and I, as members of the Lord's true Church, have special access and insight into these eternal principles and truths, especially when we listen to the Spirit for individual guidance and hear the prophet's voice as he declares the will of God to the members of the Church. You and I both know how important these eternal principles and truths are in our lives. I'm not sure those early pioneers could have faced the perils and uncertainties of the future without them, and neither can we. They are the only true and eternal way to face the future, especially in these increasingly perilous and uncertain times in which we now live.

These Norwegian shipbuilders brought with them the fundamental skills of their trade, which could be turned from building ships to building temples. What caused their dramatic shift in priorities? There is only one answer that explains their willingness to sacrifice everything to become builders of the kingdom of God. They had been taught and accepted the eternal principles and truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ. They realized that their mission was not only to help build edifices but also to contribute to the edification of others by sharing their knowledge of the gospel. As we read in section 50 of the Doctrine and Covenants, "He that preacheth and he that receiveth, understand one another, and both are edified and rejoice together" (verse 22).

Sharing the gospel

When we received the special blessing of knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ and took upon ourselves the name of Christ by entering the waters of baptism, we also accepted the obligation to

share the gospel with others. Recently, to accomplish more fully our shared responsibility to proclaim the gospel, the Church has turned the missionary program upside down. Some years ago we eliminated stake missions and shifted the focus of our efforts to the ward mission organization. With a ward mission plan developed by every ward council in the Church, progress is being made at an ever-increasing rate. Much of the success is being achieved by the full-time missionaries working closely with ward councils, ward mission leaders, and the members of the Church.

We have discovered that ward-based missionary work increases member involvement in finding and teaching investigators. Often investigators are invited to receive the missionary lessons in members' homes. Ward members become more excited to share their precious knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ when they directly experience the sweet blessings of missionary service and they receive more regular reminders from their ward leaders. Members become more inclusive as they ponder and pray about sharing the gospel with friends, neighbors, and family members of other faiths.

President Gordon B. Hinckley taught: "So many of us look upon missionary work as simply tracting. Everyone who is familiar with this work knows there is a better way. That way is through the members of the Church. Whenever there is a member who introduces an investigator, there is an immediate support system. The member bears testimony of the truth of the work. He is anxious for the happiness of his investigator friend. He becomes excited as that friend makes progress in learning the gospel."⁴

The full-time missionaries will continue to do most of the actual teaching of investigators, but members will have ample opportunity to answer questions and share their testimonies. We heed the prophet's voice more fully by preparing ourselves to teach basic gospel principles.

Preparation removes fear. It also simplifies and strengthens what the members do in support of the full-time missionaries. There are three basic lessons the full-time missionaries teach: the Restoration, the plan of salvation, and the gospel of Jesus Christ. How prepared are you to give witness and testimony to the truthfulness of these very basic lessons? Use the inspired missionary manual *Preach My Gospel* to study and prepare yourself to play that supporting role to the full-time missionaries as they teach these basic gospel discussions.

Two important lessons

May we all learn *both* of the important lessons taught by the shipbuilders from Norway who constructed the roof of the Manti Temple. First is the lesson of using the principles and truths of the past to help us face the future. Second, we learn from their desire to share what they knew with others to help build the kingdom of God. This second lesson, if we learn it well, will help many others of our brothers and

sisters, fellow sons and daughters of God, face an uncertain future with the same eternal assurances we have.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is true. It has been restored to bless our lives in these latter days. It contains all the truths, principles, and ordinances contained in our Father in Heaven's great plan of happiness, which is a plan for us to return and live with Him in the eternal realms beyond. That the gospel of Jesus Christ is His divine way for us to face our glorious future is my testimony to you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Ronald Reagan, quoted in George F. Will, "One Man's America," *Cato Policy Report*, Sept.–Oct. 2008, 11.
2. Brigham Young, quoted in Wilford Woodruff, "Celebration of Pioneers' Day," *The Utah Pioneers* (1880), 23.
3. Gordon B. Hinckley, quoted in "Manti Temple Rededicated," *Ensign*, Aug. 1985, 73.
4. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Find the Lambs, Feed the Sheep," *Ensign*, May 1999, 105.

Bishop H. David Burton

Thank you, Elder Pace, for that beautiful invocation, for listeners and speakers particularly.

Virtues

"Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God" (D&C 121:45).

As I neared my 12th birthday, there were several requirements to be completed before I could graduate from Primary. One was to recite the thirteen Articles of Faith in the prescribed order. The first twelve articles were relatively easy, but the thirteenth was much more

difficult. It was remembering the order of the virtues that presented the challenge. Thanks to a Primary teacher who was patient and persistent, I finally completed the memorization.

Years later my wife and children and I moved into our first home. We were surprised to learn that my former Primary teacher would be our neighbor. For the 40 years we have lived in the same neighborhood, she has kept our little secret concerning my learning disability.

"We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men; indeed, we may say that we follow the admonition of Paul—We believe all things, we hope all things, we

have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things. If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things” (Articles of Faith 1:13).

Today I wish to speak about personal traits we call virtues. Virtuous traits form the foundation of a Christian life and are the outward manifestation of the inner man. The spelling in English of many individual virtues concludes with the letters *ity*: integrity, humility, charity, spirituality, accountability, civility, fidelity, and the list goes on and on. Relying on literary license, I refer to the virtues ending in *ity* as the “*ity*” virtues. “*Ity*” is a suffix that means quality, state, or degree of being.

Personal traits of virtue in decline

We need only look around us to see what is taking place in our communities to realize that personal traits of virtue are in a steep decline. Reflect on the behavior of drivers on crowded highways; road rage happens all too often. Civility is all but absent in our political discourse. As countries around the world face financial and economic challenges, fidelity and honesty seem to have been replaced with greed and graft. A visit to a high school will often subject you to crude language and immodest dress. Some athletes display poor sportsmanship and seldom show humility unless publicly exposed for legal or moral infidelities. A large segment of our population feel little personal responsibility for their own temporal well-being. Some in financial distress blame bankers and lenders for loaning sums to satisfy insatiable wants rather than affordable needs. On occasion our generosity in support of good causes wanes as our appetite to acquire more than we need prevails.

Brothers and sisters, we need not be a part of the virtue malaise that is penetrating and infecting society. If we follow the world in abandoning Christian-centered virtues, the consequences may be disastrous. Individual faith and fidelity, which

have eternal consequences, will diminish. Family solidarity and spirituality will be adversely impacted. Religious influence in society will be lessened, and the rule of law will be challenged and perhaps even set aside. The seedbed for all that plagues the natural man will have been planted, to the sheer delight of Satan.

We need to stand tall and be firmly fixed in perpetuating Christlike virtues, even the “*ity*” virtues, in our everyday lives. Teaching virtuous traits begins in the home with parents who care and set the example. A good parental example encourages emulation; a poor example gives license to the children to disregard the parents’ teachings and even expand the poor example. A hypocritical example destroys credibility.

Valuable lessons learned

Eight-year-old Megan enjoys playing the piano. Recently her piano teacher offered a reward of a doughnut for faithful daily practice. The teacher said she would be “dialing for doughnuts” and would call Megan sometime during the week. If she had practiced that day, she would earn the reward. When Megan was called, she was not at home to give her report. At her weekly lesson, the teacher asked Megan if she had practiced, to which Megan responded that she thought she had and took the reward. When Megan’s mother saw the doughnut, she questioned Megan and helped her understand that she needed to be honest. An apologetic phone call to her teacher was made with her mom’s encouragement. As teacher and student visited, it was discovered that Megan really had completed her music theory writing; hence, she fully qualified for the reward. Thanks to wise, concerned parents, valuable lessons will be remembered for a long while.

Our 15-year-old grandson, Ben, is a big-time ski enthusiast, having competed in several meets and done very well. Prior to one such competition in Idaho,

his parents reminded him that his grades in school would determine whether or not he would be able to compete. A condominium in Sun Valley, Idaho, was reserved, his grandparents were planning to attend, and Ben was feverishly trying to achieve the lofty academic goals both he and his parents expected. However, at the end of the day, he fell just short of his goal. Ben missed the ski meet and lost points toward qualifying for the Junior Olympics, but Ben gained a valuable appreciation for responsibility and accountability. By remaining steadfast, parents so very often suffer and agonize more than the children they endeavor to teach.

Integrity

President James E. Faust suggested that integrity is the mother of many virtues. He noted that integrity can be defined “as a firm adherence to a code of moral values.” He also suggested that “integrity is the light that shines from a disciplined conscience. It is the strength of duty within us” (“Integrity, the Mother of Many Virtues,” in *Speaking Out on Moral Issues* [1998], 61, 62). It is difficult for a person to display virtuous traits if he or she lacks integrity. Without integrity, honesty is often forgotten. If integrity is absent, civility is impaired. If integrity is not important, spirituality is difficult to maintain. In Old Testament times, Moses counseled the children of Israel that “if a man vow a vow unto the Lord, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth” (Numbers 30:2).

President Thomas S. Monson reminded us a few years ago that “most people will not commit desperate acts if they have been taught that dignity, honesty and integrity are more important than revenge or rage; if they understand that respect and kindness ultimately give one a better chance at success” (quoting from “Family Values in a Violent Society,” *Deseret News*, Jan. 16,

1994, A12; in “Finding Peace,” *Ensign*, Mar. 2004, 4).

Cultivate virtuous traits

You may have heard about the *Lost Battalion* of World War I, the ten *lost* tribes of Israel, or perhaps the “lost boys” in J. M. Barrie’s play *Peter Pan*. You may also be acquainted with the album by Michael McLean entitled *The Forgotten Carols*. Virtuous traits, especially the “ity” virtues, must never be forgotten or set aside. If forgotten or set aside, they will inevitably become the “lost virtues.” If virtues are lost, families will be measurably weakened, individual faith in the Lord Jesus Christ will soften, and important eternal relationships may be jeopardized.

Traits of virtue broadly practiced can loosen Satan’s firm grip on society and derail his insidious plan to capture the hearts, minds, and spirits of mortal men.

Now is the time for us to join in rescuing and preserving that which is “virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy.” As we allow virtue to garnish our thoughts unceasingly and we cultivate virtuous traits in our personal lives, our communities and institutions will be improved, our children and families will be strengthened, and faith and integrity will bless individual lives.

I testify and declare that our Heavenly Father expects His children to exercise integrity, civility, fidelity, charity, generosity, morality, and all the “ity” virtues. May we have the *humility* to take the *opportunity* to act upon our *responsibility* to demonstrate our *ability* to do so, I pray in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

The choir and congregation will now join in singing “How Firm a Foundation.” After the singing, Sister Ann M. Dibb, second counselor in the Young Women general presidency, will speak to us. She will be followed by Elder Russell M. Nelson

of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The choir will then sing “Love Is Spoken Here.”

The choir and congregation sang
“How Firm a Foundation.”

Ann M. Dibb

Clinging to a bridge

A number of years ago, a one-inch article in my local newspaper caught my attention, and I have remembered it ever since: “Four people were killed and seven workers were rescued after clinging for more than an hour to the underside of a 125-foot-high bridge in St. Catharines, Ontario, [Canada,] after the scaffolding they were working on collapsed” (“News Capsules,” *Deseret News*, June 9, 1993, A2).

I was, and I continue to be, fascinated by this brief story. Shortly after reading this account, I called a family friend who lived in St. Catharines. She explained that the workers had been painting the Garden City Skyway bridge for about a year and were two weeks short of completing the project when the accident happened. After the accident, officials were asked why these men did not have any safety equipment. The answer was simple: they had the equipment; they just chose not to wear it. After the scaffolding gave way, the survivors held on to a one-inch lip of steel girder and stood on an eight-inch ledge of steel for over an hour until rescue teams could reach them. One survivor related that as he clung to the bridge, he thought a lot about his family. He said, “I just thank the Lord for me being here today. . . . It was pretty scary, I tell you” (in Rick Bogacz, “Skyway Horror,” *Standard*, June 9, 1993).

Challenges of mortality

There are many lessons to be learned and comparisons to be made from this incident. While most of us will never face such a dramatic, life-or-death situation,

many of us feel that we are going through a scary time in our personal lives.

We may feel as though we are holding on to what may seem to be a one-inch lip of steel girder. Our mortal probation is not easy, and it is not brief. We are blessed to come to this earth and gain a mortal body. This life is our opportunity to prove ourselves and exercise our agency (see Abraham 3:25). We can choose to follow Heavenly Father’s eternal plan of salvation (see Jarom 1:2; Alma 42:5; Moses 6:62) and redemption (see Jacob 6:8; Alma 12:25; 42:11), or we can try to find our own way. We can be obedient and keep His commandments, or we can reject them and face the consequences that will surely follow.

Because of this, we too have a hazardous job description and duty. We must deal with challenges. We may experience loneliness, strained relationships, betrayal of trust, temptations, addictions, limitations of our physical body, or the loss of much-needed employment. We may be challenged with feelings of disappointment because our righteous hopes and dreams have not been met in our personal timetable. We may question our abilities and fear the possibility of failure, even in our Church and family callings. The challenges and the dangers we live with today, including society’s tolerance of sin, have been prophesied by ancient and living prophets. These are just as precarious and real as the threat of falling 125 feet to certain death from a high bridge.

My life is not perfect. I deal with many of the same challenges. We all do. I know that the temptations of the adversary and the difficulties of mortality are

ever present and beset each of us. I concur with the rescued worker's expression of his dangerous experience of holding on to that steel girder: "It [is] pretty scary, I tell you."

We have not been left alone

It is important to note, however, that in the scriptures there are very few stories of individuals who lived in blissful happiness and experienced no opposition. We learn and grow by overcoming challenges with faith, persistence, and personal righteousness. I've been strengthened by President Thomas S. Monson's endless confidence in our Heavenly Father and in us. He has said: "Remember that you are entitled to our [Heavenly] Father's blessings in this work. He did not call you to your privileged post to walk alone, without guidance, trusting to luck. On the contrary, He knows your skill, He realizes your devotion, and He will convert your supposed inadequacies to recognized strengths. He has promised: 'I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up' (D&C 84:88)" ("Sugar Beets and the Worth of a Soul," *Ensign*, July 2009, 5–6).

Heavenly Father has not left us alone during our mortal probation. He has already given us all the "safety equipment" we will need to successfully return to Him. He has given us personal prayer, the scriptures, living prophets, and the Holy Ghost to guide us. At times, using this equipment may seem cumbersome, awkward, and horribly unfashionable. Its proper use requires our diligence, obedience, and persistence. But I, for one, choose to use it. We must all choose to use it.

The iron rod

In the scriptures we learn about another key piece of safety equipment—a "rod of iron." Disciples of our Savior, Jesus Christ, are invited to hold on to this rod in order to

safely find their way to eternal life. I am speaking of Lehi's vision of the tree of life found in the Book of Mormon.

Through divine personal revelation, the Book of Mormon prophet Lehi and his son Nephi were each shown a vision of our mortal probationary state and its accompanying dangers. Lehi says, "And it came to pass that there arose a mist of darkness; yea, even an exceedingly great mist of darkness, insomuch that they who had commenced in the path did lose their way, that they wandered off and were lost" (1 Nephi 8:23). Yet "he [also] saw other multitudes pressing forward; and they came and caught hold of the end of the rod of iron; and they did press their way forward, continually holding fast to [that] rod of iron, until they came forth and fell down and partook of the fruit of the tree," meaning the tree of life (1 Nephi 8:30).

From Lehi's vision we learn that we must take hold of this safety railing—this iron rod, found alongside our individual straight and narrow path—and hold tight until we reach our ultimate goal of eternal life with our Heavenly Father. Nephi promises that those who hold fast to the iron rod "would never perish; neither could the temptations and the fiery darts of the adversary overpower them unto blindness, to lead them away to destruction" (1 Nephi 15:24).

I invite you to read again the full accounts of this inspired vision. Study them, ponder them, and apply them to your daily life. In modern terms we might say we are invited to "get a grip." We must hold on tight to the iron rod and never let go.

President Harold B. Lee, the prophet when I was a teenager, taught, "If there is any one thing most needed in this time of tumult and frustration, when men and women and youth and young adults are desperately seeking for answers to the problems which afflict mankind, it is an 'iron rod' as a safe guide along the straight path on the way to eternal life, amidst the strange and devious roadways that would

eventually lead to destruction and to the ruin of all that is ‘virtuous, lovely, or of good report’” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1971, 90; or *Ensign*, June 1971, 7).

This quote was relevant when I was a teenager, and it is perhaps even more relevant today. Prophets’ words warn, teach, and encourage truth, whether they’re spoken in 600 B.C., 1971, or 2009. I encourage you to listen to, believe in, and act upon the inspired words of those we sustain as prophets, seers, and revelators.

Hold on

Holding to the iron rod is not always easy. We may let go because of peer pressure or pride, thinking we can find our own way back—later. When we do so, we are leaving our safety equipment behind. In Lehi’s vision he saw many who let go of the iron rod. Nephi says, “And many were lost from his view, wandering in strange roads” (1 Nephi 8:32). In difficult times in our own lives, we may find we are also “wandering in strange roads.” Let me reassure you that it is always possible for us to find our way back. Through repentance, made possible by the atoning sacrifice of our Savior, Jesus Christ, we can regain

and recommit to a strong grip on the iron rod and feel the loving guidance of our Heavenly Father once again. The Savior has extended an open invitation to us: repent, hold on, and don’t let go.

I, like Nephi, exhort you with all the energies of my soul that you will “give heed to the word of God and remember to keep his commandments always in all things” (1 Nephi 15:25). Use the safety equipment He has provided for you. Hold fast, and believe that Heavenly Father will bless you for your diligence.

I know the restored gospel is true, and I know we are led by a living prophet of God, President Thomas S. Monson. It is my great privilege and blessing to be his daughter. I love my parents dearly.

One evening I was feeling a bit discouraged and said, “Oh, Dad, the blessings we experience as members of the Church and the promised blessings of the temple are so good, *if we will only reach out and choose to accept them.*” He responded without hesitation, “Ann, they are everything.”

May we *hold on* to the eternal truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ because they are literally everything is my sincere prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Russell M. Nelson

Ask, seek, knock

My beloved brethren and sisters, I am very grateful for each of you. I am thankful too for the miracle of modern communication that allows this conference to reach millions of people throughout the world.

Today’s technology also allows us to use wireless telephones to exchange information rapidly. Recently Wendy and I were on assignment on another continent when we learned that a new baby had arrived in our family. We received the good news minutes after that birth had occurred half a world away.

Even more amazing than modern technology is our opportunity to access information directly from heaven, without hardware, software, or monthly service fees. It is one of the most marvelous gifts the Lord has offered to mortals. It is His generous invitation to “ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.”¹

This timeless offer to provide personal revelation is extended to all of His children. It almost sounds too good to be true. But it is true! I have received and responded to that heavenly help. And I

have learned that I always need to be ready to receive it.

Years ago, while immersed in the task of preparing a talk for general conference, I was aroused from a sound sleep with an idea impressed strongly upon my mind. Immediately I reached for pencil and paper near my bed and wrote as rapidly as I could. I went back to sleep, knowing I had captured that great impression. The next morning I looked at that piece of paper and found, much to my dismay, that my writing was totally illegible! I still keep pencil and paper at my bedside, but I write more carefully now.

Preparation for receiving revelation

To access information from heaven, one must first have a firm faith and a deep desire. One needs to “ask with a sincere heart [and] real intent, having faith in [Jesus] Christ.”² “Real intent” means that one *really intends* to follow the divine direction given.

The next requirement is to study the matter diligently. This concept was taught to leaders of this restored Church when they were first learning how to gain personal revelation. The Lord instructed them, “I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right.”³

Part of being prepared is to know and obey the relevant teachings of the Lord. Some of His timeless truths are applicable generally, such as the commandments not to steal, not to kill, and not to bear false witness. Other teachings or commandments are also general, such as those regarding the Sabbath, the sacrament, baptism, and confirmation.

Some revelations have been given for unique circumstances, such as Noah’s building of the ark or the necessity for prophets like Moses, Lehi, and Brigham to lead their followers in arduous travel. God’s long-established pattern of teaching

His children through prophets assures us that He will bless each prophet and that He will bless those who heed prophetic counsel.

Putting off the natural man

A desire to follow the prophet requires much effort because the natural man knows very little of God and even less of His prophet. Paul wrote that “the natural man [receives] not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”⁴ The change from being a natural man to a devoted disciple is a mighty one.⁵

Another prophet taught that “the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father.”⁶

Recently I observed such a mighty change in a man whom I first met about 10 years ago. He had come to a stake conference at which his son was sustained as a member of the new stake presidency. This father was not a member of the Church. After his son had been set apart, I put my arms around this father and praised him for having such a wonderful son. Then I boldly declared: “The day will come when you will want to have this son sealed to you and your wife in a holy temple. And when that day comes, I would be honored to perform that sealing for you.”

During the subsequent decade, I did not see this man. Six weeks ago he and his wife came to my office. He greeted me warmly and recounted how startled he was with my earlier invitation. He didn’t do much about it until later, when his hearing began to fail. Then he awakened to

the realization that his body was changing and that his time on earth was indeed limited. In due course he ultimately lost his hearing. At the same time, he became converted and joined the Church.

During our visit he summarized his total transformation: “I had to lose my hearing before I could heed the great importance of your message. Then I realized how much I wanted my loved ones to be sealed to me. I am now worthy and prepared. Will you please perform that sealing?”⁷ This I did with a deep sense of gratitude to God.

The gift of spiritual discernment

After such a conversion takes place, even further spiritual refinement can come. Personal revelation can be honed to become spiritual discernment. To *discern* means to sift, to separate, or to distinguish.⁸ The gift of spiritual discernment is a supernal gift.⁹ It allows members of the Church to see things not visible and to feel things not tangible.

Bishops are entitled to that gift as they face the task of seeking out the poor and caring for the needy. With that gift, sisters may view trends in the world and detect those that, however popular, are shallow or even dangerous. Members can discern between schemes that are flashy and fleeting and those refinements that are uplifting and enduring.

Discernment was implicit in important instructions President John Taylor gave long ago.¹⁰ He taught stake presidents, bishops, and others: “It is the right of those holding [these positions] to obtain the word of God with regard to the duties of their presidencies that they may more effectually carry out His holy purposes. None of the callings or positions in the priesthood are intended for the personal benefits, emoluments and fame of those who hold them, but are expressly given to fulfil the purposes of our Heavenly Father and build up the Kingdom of God upon the earth. We . . . seek to understand the

will of God, and then carry it out; and see that it is carried out by those over whom we have the charge.”¹¹

Guidelines for personal revelation

For each of you to receive revelation unique to your own needs and responsibilities, certain guidelines prevail. The Lord asks you to develop “faith, hope, charity and love, with an eye single to the glory of God.” Then with your firm “faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, godliness, charity, humility, [and] diligence,” you may *ask*, and you will receive; you may *knock*, and it will be opened unto you.¹²

Revelation from God is always compatible with His eternal law. It never contradicts His doctrine. It is facilitated by proper reverence for Deity. The Master gave this instruction:

“I, the Lord, am merciful and gracious unto those who fear me, and delight to honor those who serve me in righteousness and in truth unto the end.

“Great shall be their reward and eternal shall be their glory.

“ . . . To them will I reveal all mysteries [and] my will concerning all things pertaining to my kingdom.”¹³

Revelation need not all come at once. It may be incremental. “Saith the Lord God: I will give unto the children of men line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little; and blessed are those who hearken unto my precepts, and lend an ear unto my counsel, for they shall learn wisdom; for unto him that receiveth I will give more.”¹⁴ Patience and perseverance are part of our eternal progression.

Prophets have described what they felt while receiving revelation. Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery reported that “the veil was taken from our minds, and the eyes of our understanding were opened.”¹⁵ President Joseph F. Smith wrote, “As I pondered over these things which are written, the eyes of my understanding were

opened, and the Spirit of the Lord rested upon me.”¹⁶

Every Latter-day Saint may merit personal revelation. The invitation to ask, seek, and knock for divine direction exists because God lives and Jesus is the living Christ. It exists because this is His living Church.¹⁷ And we are blessed today because President Thomas S. Monson is His living prophet. That we may hearken to and heed his prophetic counsel is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Matthew 7:7; Luke 11:9; italics added; see also 3 Nephi 14:7; Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 7:12, in Bible appendix.
2. Moroni 10:4.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 9:8.
4. 1 Corinthians 2:14.
5. See Mosiah 5:2; Alma 5:12–14.
6. Mosiah 3:19.
7. Such conversions are complete. John Newton (1725–1807), for example, changed his life from that of a slave trader to a devoted disciple of the Lord, summarizing his conversion when he wrote: “Amazing grace! (how sweet the sound!) / That sav’d a wretch like me! / I once was lost, but now am found; / Was blind, but now I see” (“Amazing Grace,” *Olney Hymns* [1779], no. 41).
8. *Discern* comes from the Latin *discernere*, meaning “to separate [or] distinguish between.” The Latin prefix *dis* means “apart,” and the suffix *cernere* means “to sift.” See *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. (2003), “discern.”
9. See Doctrine and Covenants 46:23, 26–27.
10. After the death of President Brigham Young in 1877, the affairs of the Church were directed by the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The apostolic interregnum continued until 1880, when the First Presidency was reorganized. John Taylor was President of the Quorum of the Twelve when this counsel was given on February 23, 1878.
11. John Taylor, in James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. (1965–75), 2:307.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 4:5–6; see also verse 7.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 76:5–7.
14. 2 Nephi 28:30.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 110:1.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 138:11. Then followed the revelation about the preaching of the gospel to those who had died without an opportunity to hear the gospel in mortality (see verses 29–37).
17. See Doctrine and Covenants 1:30.

The choir sang “Love Is Spoken Here.”

President Monson

It will now be my privilege to address you. Following my remarks, these services will conclude with the choir singing “Have I Done Any Good?” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Enrique R. Falabella of the Seventy.

President Thomas S. Monson

My beloved brothers and sisters, I greet you this morning with love in my heart for the gospel of Jesus Christ and for each of you. I am grateful for the privilege to

stand before you, and I pray that I might effectively communicate to you that which I have felt prompted to say.

“What did you do for someone today?”

A few years ago I read an article written by Jack McConnell, MD. He grew up in the hills of southwest Virginia in the United States as one of seven children of a Methodist minister and a stay-at-home mother. Their circumstances were very humble. He recounted that during his childhood, every day as the family sat around the dinner table, his father would ask each one in turn, “And what did you do for someone today?”¹ The children were determined to do a good turn every day so they could report to their father that they had helped someone. Dr. McConnell calls this exercise his father’s most valuable legacy, for *that* expectation and *those* words inspired him and his siblings to help others throughout their lives. As they grew and matured, their motivation for providing service changed to an inner desire to help others.

Besides Dr. McConnell’s distinguished medical career—where he directed the development of the tuberculosis tine test, participated in the early development of the polio vaccine, supervised the development of Tylenol, and was instrumental in developing the magnetic resonance imaging procedure, or MRI—he created an organization he calls Volunteers in Medicine, which gives retired medical personnel a chance to volunteer at free clinics serving the working uninsured. Dr. McConnell said his leisure time since he retired has “evaporated into 60-hour weeks of unpaid work, but [his] energy level has increased and there is a satisfaction in [his] life that wasn’t there before.” He made this statement: “In one of those paradoxes of life, I have benefited more from Volunteers in Medicine than my patients have.”² There are now over 70 such clinics across the United States.

Of course, we can’t all be Dr. McConnells, establishing medical clinics to help the poor; however, the needs of others are ever present, and each of us can do something to help someone.

Losing ourselves in service

The Apostle Paul admonished, “By love serve one another.”³ Recall with me the familiar words of King Benjamin in the Book of Mormon: “When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God.”⁴

The Savior taught His disciples, “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.”⁵

I believe the Savior is telling us that unless we lose ourselves in service to others, there is little purpose to our own lives. Those who live only for themselves eventually shrivel up and figuratively lose their lives, while those who lose themselves in service to others grow and flourish—and in effect save their lives.

In the October 1963 general conference—the conference at which I was sustained as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles—President David O. McKay made this statement: “Man’s greatest happiness comes from losing himself for the good of others.”⁶

The Lord depends on us

Often we live side by side but do not communicate heart to heart. There are those within the sphere of our own influence who, with outstretched hands, cry out, “Is there no balm in Gilead?”⁷

I am confident it is the *intention* of each member of the Church to serve and to help those in need. At baptism we covenanted to “bear one another’s burdens, that they may be light.”⁸ How many times has your heart been touched as you have witnessed the need of another? How often have you *intended* to be the one to help? And yet how often has day-to-day living interfered and you’ve left it for others to help, feeling that “oh, surely someone will take care of that need”?

We become so caught up in the busyness of our lives. Were we to step back, however, and take a good look at what

we're doing, we may find that we have immersed ourselves in the "thick of thin things." In other words, too often we spend most of our time taking care of the things which do not really matter much at all in the grand scheme of things, neglecting those more important causes.

Many years ago I heard a poem which has stayed with me, by which I have tried to guide my life. It's one of my favorites:

I have wept in the night
For the shortness of sight
That to somebody's need made me
blind;
But I never have yet
Felt a tinge of regret
For being a little too kind.⁹

My brothers and sisters, we are surrounded by those in need of our attention, our encouragement, our support, our comfort, our kindness—be they family members, friends, acquaintances, or strangers. We are the Lord's hands here upon the earth, with the mandate to serve and to lift His children. He is dependent upon each of us.

You may lament: I can barely make it through each day, doing all that I need to do. How can I provide service for others? What can I possibly do?

The ideal birthday gift

Just over a year ago, I was interviewed by the *Church News* prior to my birthday. At the conclusion of the interview, the reporter asked what I would consider the ideal gift that members worldwide could give to me. I replied, "Find someone who is having a hard time or is ill or lonely, and do something for him or her."¹⁰

I was overwhelmed when this year for my birthday I received hundreds of cards and letters from members of the Church around the world telling me how they had fulfilled that birthday wish. The acts of service ranged from assembling humanitarian kits to doing yard work.

Dozens and dozens of Primaries challenged the children to provide service, and then those acts of service were recorded and sent to me. I must say that the methods for recording them were creative. Many came in the form of pages put together into various shapes and sizes of books. Some contained cards or pictures drawn or colored by the children. One very creative Primary sent a large jar containing hundreds of what they called "warm fuzzies," each one representing an act of service performed during the year by one of the children in the Primary. I can only imagine the happiness these children experienced as they told of their service and then placed a "warm fuzzy" in the jar.

I share with you just a few of the countless notes contained in the many gifts I received. One small child wrote, "My grandpa had a stroke, and I held his hand." From an 8-year-old girl: "My sister and I served my mom and family by organizing and cleaning the toy closet. It took us a few hours and we had fun. The best part was that we surprised my mom and made her happy because she didn't even ask us to do it." An 11-year-old girl wrote: "There was a family in my ward that did not have a lot of money. They have three little girls. The mom and dad had to go somewhere, so I offered to watch the three girls. The dad was just about to hand me a \$5 bill. I said, 'I can't take [it].' My service was that I watched the girls for free." A Primary child in Mongolia wrote that he had brought in water from the well so his mother would not have to do so. From a 4-year-old boy, no doubt written by a Primary teacher: "My dad is gone for army training for a few weeks. My special job is to give my mom hugs and kisses." Wrote a 9-year-old girl: "I picked strawberries for my great-grandma. I felt good inside!" And another: "I played with a lonely kid."

From an 11-year-old boy: "I went to a lady's house and asked her questions and sang her a song. It felt good to visit

her. She was happy because she never gets visitors.” Reading this particular note reminded me of words penned long ago by Elder Richard L. Evans of the Quorum of the Twelve. Said he: “It is difficult for those who are young to understand the loneliness that comes when life changes from a time of preparation and performance to a time of putting things away. . . . To be so long the center of a home, so much sought after, and then, almost suddenly to be on the sidelines watching the procession pass by—this is living into loneliness. . . . We have to live a long time to learn how empty a room can be that is filled only with furniture. It takes someone . . . beyond mere hired service, beyond institutional care or professional duty, to thaw out the memories of the past and keep them warmly living in the present. . . . We cannot bring them back the morning hours of youth. But we can help them live in the warm glow of a sunset made more beautiful by our thoughtfulness . . . and unfeigned love.”¹¹

My birthday cards and notes came also from teenagers in Young Men and Young Women classes who made blankets for hospitals, served in food pantries, were baptized for the dead, and performed numerous other acts of service.

Relief Societies, where help can always be found, provided service above and beyond that which they would normally have given. Priesthood groups did the same.

My brothers and sisters, my heart has seldom been as touched and grateful as it was when Sister Monson and I literally spent hours reading of these gifts. My heart is full now as I speak of the experience and contemplate the lives which have been blessed as a result, for both the giver and the receiver.

“Ye have done it unto me”

The words from the 25th chapter of Matthew come to mind:

“Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

“For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

“Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

“Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

“When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

“Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

“And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”¹²

The service of the Lord

My brothers and sisters, may we ask ourselves the question which greeted Dr. Jack McConnell and his brothers and sisters each evening at dinnertime: “What have I done for someone today?” May the words of a familiar hymn penetrate our very souls and find lodgment in our hearts:

Have I done any good in the world today?

Have I helped anyone in need?

Have I cheered up the sad and made someone feel glad?

If not, I have failed indeed.

Has anyone’s burden been lighter today?

Because I was willing to share?

Have the sick and the weary been helped on their way?

When they needed my help was I there?¹³

That service to which all of us have been called is the service of the Lord Jesus Christ.

As He enlists us to His cause, He invites us to draw close to Him. He speaks to you and to me:

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

“For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”¹⁴

If we truly listen, we may hear that voice from far away say to us, as it spoke to another, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.”¹⁵ That each may qualify for this blessing from our Lord is my prayer, and I offer it in His name, even Jesus Christ, our Savior, amen.

NOTES

1. Jack McConnell, “And What Did You Do for Someone Today?” *Newsweek*, June 18, 2001, 13.
2. McConnell, “And What Did You Do for Someone Today?” 13.
3. Galatians 5:13.

4. Mosiah 2:17.

5. Luke 9:24.

6. David O. McKay, in Conference Report, Oct. 1963, 8.

7. Jeremiah 8:22.

8. Mosiah 18:8.

9. Anonymous, quoted in Richard L. Evans, “The Quality of Kindness,” *Improvement Era*, May 1960, 340.

10. See Gerry Avant, “Prophet’s Birthday,” *Church News*, Aug. 23, 2008, 4.

11. Richard L. Evans, “Living into Loneliness,” *Improvement Era*, July 1948, 445.

12. Matthew 25:34–40.

13. “Have I Done Any Good?” *Hymns*, no. 223.

14. Matthew 11:28–30.

15. Matthew 25:21.

The choir sang “Have I Done Any Good?”

Elder Enrique R. Falabella offered the benediction.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 179th Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, October 4, 2009. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for this session. Mack Wilberg and Ryan Murphy directed the choir, and Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts were the organists. President Uchtdorf made the following remarks as the meeting began.

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf

My dear brothers and sisters, we welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 179th Semiannual

General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We extend our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, the Internet, or satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Mack Wilberg and Ryan Murphy, with Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing “In Hymns of Praise.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Marlin K. Jensen of the Seventy. The choir will then sing “O Divine Redeemer.”

The choir sang “In Hymns of Praise.”
Elder Marlin K. Jensen offered the
invocation.

The choir sang “O Divine Redeemer.”

President Uchtdorf

Thank you, Tabernacle Choir.

We will now be pleased to hear from Elders Jeffrey R. Holland and Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Following Elder Cook’s remarks, we will hear from Elder Brent H. Nielson of the Seventy.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

Troubles of the heart and soul

Prophecies regarding the last days often refer to large-scale calamities such as earthquakes or famines or floods. These in turn may be linked to widespread economic or political upheavals of one kind or another.

But there is one kind of latter-day destruction that has always sounded to me more personal than public, more individual than collective—a warning, perhaps more applicable inside the Church than outside it. The Savior warned that in the last days even those of the covenant, the very elect, could be deceived by the enemy of truth.¹ If we think of this as a form of spiritual destruction, it may cast light on another latter-day prophecy. Think of the heart as the figurative center of our faith, the poetic location of our loyalties and our values; then consider Jesus’s declaration that in the last days “men’s hearts [shall fail] them.”²

The encouraging thing, of course, is that our Father in Heaven knows all of these latter-day dangers, these troubles of the heart and soul, and has given counsel and protections regarding them.

Lehi’s dream

In light of that, it has always been significant to me that the Book of Mormon, one of the Lord’s powerful keystones³ in

this counteroffensive against latter-day ills, begins with a great parable of life, an extended allegory of hope versus fear, of light versus darkness, of salvation versus destruction—an allegory of which Sister Ann M. Dibb spoke so movingly this morning.

In Lehi’s dream an already difficult journey gets more difficult when a mist of darkness arises, obscuring any view of the safe but narrow path his family and others are to follow. It is imperative to note that this mist of darkness descends on *all* the travelers—the faithful and the determined ones (the elect, we might even say) as well as the weaker and ungrounded ones. The principal point of the story is that the successful travelers resist all distractions, including the lure of forbidden paths and jeering taunts from the vain and proud who have taken those paths. The record says that the protected “did press their way forward, continually [and, I might add, tenaciously] holding fast” to a rod of iron that runs unfailingly along the course of the true path.⁴ However dark the night *or* the day, the rod marks the way of that solitary, redeeming trail.

“I beheld,” Nephi says later, “that the rod of iron . . . was the word of God, [leading] . . . to the tree of life; . . . a representation of the love of God.” Viewing this manifestation of God’s love, Nephi goes on to say:

"I looked and beheld the Redeemer of the world, . . . [who] went forth ministering unto the people. . . .

"... And I beheld multitudes of people who were sick, and who were afflicted with all manner of diseases, and with devils and unclean spirits; . . . and they were healed by the power of the Lamb of God; and the devils and the unclean spirits were cast out."⁵

Love. Healing. Help. Hope. The power of Christ to counter all troubles in all times—including the end of times. That is the safe harbor God wants for us in personal or public days of despair. That is the message with which the Book of Mormon begins, and that is the message with which it ends, calling all to "come unto Christ, and be perfected in him."⁶ That phrase—taken from Moroni's final lines of testimony, written 1,000 years after Lehi's vision—is a dying man's testimony of the only true way.

Testimony of Joseph and Hyrum Smith

May I refer to a modern "last days" testimony? When Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum started for Carthage to face what they knew would be an imminent martyrdom, Hyrum read these words to comfort the heart of his brother:

"Thou hast been faithful; wherefore, . . . thou shalt be made strong, even unto the sitting down in the place which I have prepared in the mansions of my Father.

"And now I, Moroni, bid farewell . . . until we shall meet before the judgment-seat of Christ."⁷

A few short verses from the 12th chapter of Ether in the Book of Mormon. Before closing the book, Hyrum turned down the corner of the page from which he had read, marking it as part of the everlasting testimony for which these two brothers were about to die. I hold in my hand that book, the very copy from which Hyrum read, the same corner of the page turned down, still visible. Later, when actually incarcerated in the jail, Joseph the Prophet

turned to the guards who held him captive and bore a powerful testimony of the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon.⁸ Shortly thereafter pistol and ball would take the lives of these two testators.

As one of a thousand elements of my own testimony of the divinity of the Book of Mormon, I submit this as yet one more evidence of its truthfulness. In this their greatest—and last—hour of need, I ask you: would these men blaspheme before God by continuing to fix their lives, their honor, and their own search for eternal salvation on a book (and by implication a church and a ministry) they had fictitiously created out of whole cloth?

Never mind that their wives are about to be widows and their children fatherless. Never mind that their little band of followers will yet be "houseless, friendless, and homeless" and that their children will leave footprints of blood across frozen rivers and an untamed prairie floor.⁹ Never mind that legions will die and other legions live declaring in the four quarters of this earth that they know the Book of Mormon and the Church which espouses it to be true. Disregard all of that, and tell me whether in this hour of death these two men would enter the presence of their Eternal Judge quoting from and finding solace in a book which, if *not* the very word of God, would brand them as imposters and charlatans until the end of time? *They would not do that!* They were willing to die rather than deny the divine origin and the eternal truthfulness of the Book of Mormon.

Divinity of the Book of Mormon

For 179 years this book has been examined and attacked, denied and deconstructed, targeted and torn apart like perhaps no other book in modern religious history—perhaps like no other book in *any* religious history. And still it stands. Failed theories about its origins have been born and parroted and have died—from Ethan Smith to Solomon Spaulding to deranged

paranoid to cunning genius. None of these frankly pathetic answers for this book has ever withstood examination because *there is no other answer* than the one Joseph gave as its young, unlearned translator. In this I stand with my own great-grandfather, who said simply enough, “No wicked man could write such a book as this; and no good man would write it, unless it were true and he were commanded of God to do so.”¹⁰

I testify that one cannot come to full faith in this latter-day work—and thereby find the fullest measure of peace and comfort in these, our times—until he or she embraces the divinity of the Book of Mormon and the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom it testifies. If *anyone* is foolish enough or misled enough to reject 531 pages of a heretofore unknown text teeming with literary and Semitic complexity without honestly attempting to account for the origin of those pages—especially without accounting for their powerful witness of Jesus Christ and the profound spiritual impact that witness has had on what is now tens of millions of readers—if that is the case, then such a person, elect or otherwise, has been deceived; and if he or she leaves this Church, it must be done by crawling over or under or around the Book of Mormon to make that exit. In that sense the book is what Christ Himself was said to be: “a stone of stumbling, . . . a rock of offence,”¹¹ a barrier in the path of one who wishes not to believe in this work. Witnesses, even witnesses who were for a time hostile to Joseph, testified to their death that they had seen an angel and had handled the plates. “They have been shown unto us by the power of God, and not of man,” they declared. “Wherefore we know of a surety that the work is true.”¹²

A witness of the Book of Mormon

Now, I did not sail with the brother of Jared in crossing an ocean, settling in a new world. I did not hear King Benjamin

speak his angelically delivered sermon. I did not proselyte with Alma and Amulek nor witness the fiery death of innocent believers. I was not among the Nephite crowd who touched the wounds of the resurrected Lord, nor did I weep with Mormon and Moroni over the destruction of an entire civilization. But my testimony of this record and the peace it brings to the human heart is as binding and unequivocal as was theirs. Like them, “[I] give [my name] unto the world, to witness unto the world that which [I] *have seen*.” And like them, “[I] lie not, God bearing witness of it.”¹³

I ask that my testimony of the Book of Mormon and all that it implies, given today under my own oath and office, be recorded by men on earth and angels in heaven. I hope I have a few years left in my “last days,” but whether I do or do not, I want it absolutely clear when I stand before the judgment bar of God that I declared to the world, in the most straightforward language I could summon, that the Book of Mormon is true, that it came forth the way Joseph said it came forth and was given to bring happiness and hope to the faithful in the travail of the latter days.

My witness echoes that of Nephi, who wrote part of the book in *his* “last days”:

“Hearken unto these words and believe in Christ; and if ye believe not in these words believe in Christ. *And if ye shall believe in Christ ye will believe in these words, for they are the words of Christ, . . . and they teach all men that they should do good.*

“And if they are not the words of Christ, judge ye—for Christ will show unto you, with power and great glory, that they are his words, *at the last day.*”¹⁴

Brothers and sisters, God always provides safety for the soul, and with the Book of Mormon, He has again done that in our time. Remember this declaration by Jesus Himself: “Whoso treasureth up my word, shall not be deceived”¹⁵—and in the last days neither your heart nor your faith

will fail you. Of this I earnestly testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See Matthew 24:24; see also Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:22.
2. Luke 21:26.
3. See *History of the Church*, 4:461.
4. 1 Nephi 8:30.
5. 1 Nephi 11:25, 27–28, 31.
6. Moroni 10:32.
7. Ether 12:37–38; see also Doctrine and Covenants 135:5.
8. See *History of the Church*, 6:600.
9. See Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 4:539.
10. George Cannon, quoted in “The Twelve Apostles,” in Andrew Jenson, ed., *The Historical Record*, 6:175.
11. 1 Peter 2:8.
12. “The Testimony of Three Witnesses,” Book of Mormon.
13. “The Testimony of Eight Witnesses,” Book of Mormon; italics added.
14. 2 Nephi 33:10–11; italics added.
15. Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:37.

Elder Quentin L. Cook

Accountability and stewardship

We live in perilous times when many believe we are not accountable to God and that we do not have personal responsibility or stewardship for ourselves or others. Many in the world are focused on self-gratification, put themselves first, and love pleasure more than they love righteousness. They do not believe they are their brother's keeper. In the Church, however, we believe that these stewardships are a sacred trust.

Recently a group of highly respected Jewish leaders and rabbis visited Church facilities in the Salt Lake Valley, including Welfare Square, the Humanitarian Center, the Family History Library, and the Oquirrh Mountain Utah Temple open house. At the conclusion of their visit, one of the most eminent rabbis in America expressed his feelings about what he had seen and felt.¹

He cited concepts from Jewish thinkers rooted in the Talmud² and pointed out that there are two very different reasons people engage in acts of kindness and generosity. Some people visit the sick, assist the poor, and serve their fellowmen because they believe it is the right thing to do and others will reciprocate and do the same for them when they are in need. He explained that while this is good, builds caring

communities, and should be considered a noble reason, a higher motive is when we serve our fellowmen because that is what we believe God wants us to do.

He stated that as a result of his visit, he believed the Latter-day Saints undertake welfare and humanitarian efforts and the work of salvation in our temples in order to do what we believe God wants us to do.

This feeling of accountability, which is encompassed by the first great commandment to love God, has been described by some as “obedience to the unenforceable.”³ We try to do what is right because we love and want to please our Father in Heaven, not because someone is forcing us to obey.

The War in Heaven was fought after Satan said that he would force everyone to obey his ideas. That was rejected. As a result, we have our moral agency and the freedom to choose our course in this life. But we also are accountable for that agency. The Lord has said we will be “accountable for [our] own sins in the day of judgment.”⁴ The principles of accountability and stewardship have great significance in our doctrine.⁵

In the Church, stewardship is *not* limited to a *temporal* trust or responsibility. President Spencer W. Kimball taught: “We

are stewards over our bodies, minds, families, and properties. . . . A faithful steward is one who exercises righteous dominion, cares for his own, and looks to the poor and needy.”⁶

While there are many areas of stewardship, I have chosen to address two. The first is stewardship of ourselves and our families. The second is stewardship for the poor and needy.

A spring of water

The Lord often used parables relating to the land in teaching accountability and stewardship. When I was a small boy, I would visit my grandparents at their ranch during the summer. There was no electrical power, running water, or indoor plumbing. There was, however, a spring of water next to their small ranch house. The spring created a little pond of clear, pure water, where several times a day I would help my grandmother carry water to the house for drinking, cooking, bathing, and washing clothes. My grandparents loved this life-giving spring and took special precautions to protect it.

Many years later my grandfather was in his early 90s and did not live on the property; he was unable to maintain or oversee it. I drove him to see the ranch which he loved. His high expectations at seeing the ranch turned to disappointment when he realized the fences that protected the spring had fallen into disrepair and cows had damaged the spring and the precious, pure springwater had been significantly polluted. He was upset with the damage and the pollution. To him, it was a violation of a trust he had observed all his working life. He felt somehow he had not protected that life-sustaining spring which had meant so much to him.

Just as the pure spring was polluted when not protected, we live in a time when virtue and chastity are not safeguarded.⁷ The eternal significance of personal morality is not respected. A loving Father in Heaven has provided us with the means to

bring His spirit children into this world to fulfill the full measure of their creation. He has instructed us that the wellsprings of life are to be kept pure, just as the beautiful spring on the ranch required protection in order to sustain life. This is one of the reasons why virtue and chastity are so important in our Father in Heaven’s plan.

Because of my grandfather’s reaction to the polluted spring, improvements and protections were undertaken which returned the spring to its original beauty and purity.

The Lord’s standard of morality

As servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is our sacred responsibility to teach His standard of morality, which is the same for all of His children. When our thoughts or our actions are impure, we violate His standard. The Lord has said, “I . . . cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance.”⁸ Some attempt to rationalize away their conduct.

In a poem by John Holmes titled “Talk,” an old, deaf New England shipbuilder teaches a young man about rationalization. In describing one of the lessons he learned, the youth explains, “I wouldn’t have known that however you build it, the ship must sail; you can’t explain to the ocean.”⁹

It has been suggested that what happens in a certain city stays in a certain city. I like the sign posted in Sevier County, Utah, which states, “What happens in Sevier County . . . you can share with your friends!!!” When we realize that we are accountable to God, we see how foolish rationalizations can be. Those who rationalize remind us of little children who cover their eyes, convinced that if they can’t see us, we can’t see them. I would suggest that if we think about giving an accounting of our actions to the Savior, our rationalizations will be seen in their true light.

We are aware that there are those who have already engaged in conduct

inconsistent with this sacred standard of morality. Please understand that through the Savior's Atonement, all can repent and return, like the spring of water, to a clean and pure state. It is difficult to repent; it requires a broken heart and a contrite spirit.¹⁰ But when the steps to repentance are righteously followed, the words spoken by the prophet Alma to his son Corianton, who had been involved in moral transgressions, are applicable: "And now, my son, I desire that ye should let these things trouble you no more, and only let your sins trouble you, with that trouble which shall bring you down unto repentance."¹¹ The Savior has said, "Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more."¹²

Family responsibilities

With respect to our stewardship for our families, some have taught that when we report to the Savior and He asks us to give an account of our earthly responsibilities, two important inquiries will relate to our families. The first will be our relationship with our spouse, and the second will be about each of our children.¹³

It is easy to confuse our priorities. We have a duty to secure the physical safety and well-being of our children. However, some parents place undue priority on temporal and material possessions. Some are far less diligent in their efforts to immerse their children in the gospel of Jesus Christ.¹⁴ Remember that having religious observance in the home is as important as providing food, clothing, and shelter. Parents can also help children discover and develop their talents. We are responsible for the talents we have received. Children who are not taught that they are accountable for their time and talents are increasingly subject to the foolishness and unrighteousness that are so pervasive in the world.¹⁵ The family proclamation warns that individuals "who fail to fulfill

family responsibilities will one day stand accountable before God."¹⁶

Caring for the poor and needy

The second stewardship is caring for the poor and those in need, which applies to virtually all of us at one time or another. The Lord's admonition that we are stewards for those in need contains some of the strongest language in all of scripture: "If any man shall take of the abundance which I have made, and impart not his portion . . . unto the poor and the needy, he shall, with the wicked, lift up his eyes in hell, being in torment."¹⁷ We are accountable as stewards over earthly blessings, which the Lord has provided.

The Jewish leaders I mentioned earlier were particularly impressed with the principle of fasting and then paying a generous fast offering. They thought it was remarkable that Church members across the world would fast monthly and then make a freewill offering for the benefit of those who are in need.

When the rabbis visited Welfare Square, they were touched to learn that even in difficult economic times, our members, concerned about the challenges experienced by many, continue to donate generously to help the poor and needy.

I can remember when I was called as a bishop, my predecessor, Bishop Russell Johnson, warned me that I would have to be careful what I asked the members to do. He said, "Some will respond to every suggestion, even at great sacrifice." He mentioned one widow in her 80s who had cared for both a husband and a son through long illnesses before they passed away. Bishop Johnson said that despite having small resources, she would always try to respond. I found this to be true. Every time I mentioned the need for contributions or service to bless others, Sarah was often the first to respond.

One Saturday another sister called me and said, "Bishop, come quick! Save

Sarah!” This sister reported that 80-year-old Sarah was on top of a ladder cleaning out this neighbor’s rain gutters. This sister was terrified that Sarah would fall and wanted the bishop to intervene.

I am not suggesting that everyone can or should imitate Sarah. Some feel guilty because they cannot meet every need immediately. I love the quote Elder Neal A. Maxwell often used from Anne Morrow Lindbergh: “My life cannot implement in action the demands of all the people to whom my heart responds.”¹⁸ King Benjamin taught, “See that all these things are done in wisdom and order; for it is not requisite that a man should run faster than he has strength.” But he added that we should be diligent.¹⁹

Providing Christlike service

My heart rejoices as I observe the Saints all over the Church doing everything they can to provide Christlike service wherever there is a need. Because of member contributions, the Church can quietly and quickly, without fanfare, respond to needs all over the world.²⁰ The Church is already responding to the natural disasters in the Philippines, the Pacific Islands, and Indonesia.

Last year our members responded to Hurricane Gustav. The Church worked closely with a humanitarian organization led by Martin Luther King III. Mr. King subsequently visited Salt Lake City and said: “I originally came to express my appreciation to the Church for their humanitarian support, but I quickly learned that the essence of who you are is so much deeper and profound. Between the Humanitarian Center, Welfare Square, and the temple open house, I now have a greater appreciation for why you do what you do.”

In all of our stewardship efforts, we follow Jesus Christ. We try to emulate what He has asked us to do, both by His teachings and His example. With all our hearts we express our appreciation to the

membership of the Church for their generous contributions and Christlike service.

Blessings of faithful stewardship

Isaiah, speaking of the fast and feeding the hungry and clothing the naked, in touching language promised, “Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer.”²¹ Isaiah continues: “And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; . . . the Lord shall guide thee continually, . . . and thou shalt be like . . . a spring of water, whose waters fail not. . . . [And] thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations.”²²

My hope is that each of us will review individually and as families the stewardships for which we have responsibility and accountability. I pray that we will do so knowing we are ultimately accountable to God and that in this life we will be adhering to the unenforceable.

I am grateful for the counsel of a loving, faithful prophet to serve and rescue those in need. As we follow his counsel, I know we will qualify for the Lord’s promise: “And whoso is found a faithful, a just, and a wise steward shall enter into the joy of his Lord, and shall inherit eternal life.”²³

I bear my witness of this sacred truth in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Rabbi Haskel Lookstein, former president of the New York Board of Rabbis, president of the Synagogue Council of America, and chairman of the National Rabbinic Cabinet of UJA.
2. “The Talmud is the repository of thousands of years of Jewish wisdom, and the oral law . . . finds expression therein” (Adin Steinsaltz, *The Essential Talmud* [2006], 4).
3. John Fletcher Moulton, quoted in Clayton M. Christensen, “The Importance of Asking the Right Questions” (speech given at Southern New Hampshire University commencement, May 16, 2009), 3; see also Deuteronomy 6:4–7.

4. Doctrine and Covenants 101:78.
5. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:71. All who are accountable should repent and be baptized (see D&C 18:42). Those who die before the age of accountability are saved in the celestial kingdom (see D&C 137:10; see also D&C 29:46–47, 50).
6. Spencer W. Kimball, in Conference Report, Oct. 1977, 124–25; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1977, 78.
7. See Gregory Katz, “U.K. Health Booklet’s Message: Teen Sex Can Be Fun,” *Deseret News*, July 15, 2009, A9.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 1:31.
9. “Talk,” in Collected Poems of John Holmes, <http://hdl.handle.net/10427/14894>.
10. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:37; 2 Nephi 2:7; Alma 39; 3 Nephi 9:20. President Ezra Taft Benson defined a broken heart and a contrite spirit this way: “Godly sorrow . . . is a deep realization that our actions have offended our Father and our God. It is the sharp and keen awareness that . . . our sins caused Him [the Savior] to bleed at every pore. This very real mental and spiritual anguish is what the scriptures refer to as having a ‘broken heart and a contrite spirit’” (“A Mighty Change of Heart,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1989, 4).
11. Alma 42:29.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 58:42.
13. See Robert D. Hales, “Understandings of the Heart,” in *Brigham Young University 1987–88 Devotional and Fireside Speeches* (1988), 129; see also 2 Nephi 9:41.
14. See Joseph Fielding Smith, *Take Heed to Yourselves!* comp. Joseph Fielding Smith Jr. (1971), 221.
15. See Mark 7:20–23.
16. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102; see also Russell M. Nelson, in Conference Report, Oct. 2001, 83–87; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 69–71.
17. Doctrine and Covenants 104:18.
18. Anne Morrow Lindbergh, quoted in Neal A. Maxwell, “Wisdom and Order,” *Ensign*, June 1994, 41.
19. See Mosiah 4:27.
20. Over the last 10 years, the Church has provided over U.S. \$900 million in donations and material assistance for humanitarian aid and countless man- and woman-hours of service. For example, with respect to Hurricane Katrina, over 330,000 hours of hard, dedicated service were provided (report of Elder John S. Anderson, Area Seventy, who supervised the relief effort).
21. Isaiah 58:9.
22. Isaiah 58:10–12.
23. Doctrine and Covenants 51:19; see also Matthew 25:34–46.

Elder Brent H. Nielson

“Teach all nations”

As the Savior’s earthly ministry drew to a close, He appeared as a resurrected being to His Apostles. His charge to them is the same call He extends to you of the rising generation today: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 28:19).

On April 6, 1974, the Church sustained a new prophet, President Spencer W. Kimball. That same day I received

my call to serve as a full-time missionary in Finland. I wasn’t aware at the time that President Kimball had just delivered a landmark address that week to the General Authorities and regional representatives of the Church. Later I learned that in that address President Kimball prophetically outlined his vision as to how we as a church would accomplish the Savior’s charge to “teach all nations.” In his address, President Kimball invited the members of the Church to lengthen their stride and enlarge their vision. He asked

that every worthy young man prepare to serve an honorable full-time mission. He encouraged the members in each country to prepare to supply their own missionaries, and he called upon “able men to assist the Twelve [Apostles] to move out into the world and to open the doors of every nation” (“When the World Will Be Converted,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1974, 10).

President Kimball also said in his 1974 address that there were 3.3 million members of the Church, 18,600 full-time missionaries, and 633 stakes. He challenged us to do better and asked us to change our sights and raise our vision (see “When the World Will Be Converted,” 7–8).

In response, we as members of the Church began to pray regularly in our families, in our sacrament meetings, and in our stake conferences that the hearts of the leaders of nations would be softened and the doors opened to our missionaries. The members began to see more clearly their responsibility to share the gospel. Our young men stepped up, and a great army of missionaries was gathered. We witnessed President Kimball’s vision begin to unfold.

Prayer for borders to open

While serving in Finland, I learned that my mission president’s wife, Sister Lea Mahoney, was a native of Finland. As a young girl she had grown up in the eastern portion of Finland in a city named Viipuri. As the ravages of war engulfed Finland and other countries during World War II, she and her family left their home, and Viipuri became part of the Soviet Union and was renamed Vyborg. In our zone conferences, Sister Mahoney would tell us of those left behind in Viipuri and of her desire that the gospel be taken to them. Following President Kimball’s challenge, we unitedly prayed that the hearts of the leaders of that nation would be softened so that the gospel could be taken by our missionaries into the Soviet Union.

We would go to the border between Finland and the Soviet Union and see the guard towers and the fences, and we would wonder who those brave young men and young women would be and when they would cross that border to take the gospel to the people there. I must admit, at that time it seemed like an impossible task.

Three years ago, our son Eric received a mission call to serve in the Russia St. Petersburg Mission. In his first letter home, he wrote something like this: “Dear Mom and Dad, I have been assigned to my first city in Russia. Dad, you may have heard of it before. It is called Vyborg, but it was previously a Finnish city named Viipuri.”

Tears came to my eyes as I understood that Eric was in the very city we had prayed about 32 years earlier. Eric found a chapel there and a branch of faithful Saints. He was living and serving in a place that to me as a young man had seemed impossible to enter.

I did not realize those many years ago, as we prayed for the borders to open and the missionaries to go in, that I was praying for our son. Most importantly for you of the rising generation, our son Eric did not realize that he and his companions were the answer to the prayers that had been offered by thousands of faithful Saints so many years ago. You of the rising generation are the fulfillment of prophecy that in our day “the truth of God will go forth boldly, nobly, and independent, till it has penetrated every continent, visited every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear, till the purposes of God shall be accomplished, and the Great Jehovah shall say the work is done” (Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 4:540).

Call to the rising generation

Since President Kimball’s prophetic instruction 35 years ago, Church membership has grown to 13.5 million members. There are now 52,000 missionaries and over 2,800 stakes of Zion. Who are

the laborers in the vineyard who have assisted in bringing to pass this marvelous work and a wonder? They are certainly the prophets and apostles seated before us today. They are also the wonderful stake presidents and bishops who have served so faithfully. But they are also your parents—the mothers and fathers—aunts and uncles, and brothers and sisters who sit beside you, the rising generation today. Most critical, however, is the fact that as we strive to take the gospel to all nations, we have just begun to scratch the surface.

And so the torch is passed to a new generation. The Savior, through His prophet today, President Thomas S. Monson, has renewed the call as he declared:

“Our keynote was sounded by our Lord and our Savior, who stands at the head of the great army of missionaries worldwide. After His Resurrection, He appeared to His 11 disciples. He could have given them any counsel, any expression, any warning that He chose to give. But what did He say? It’s recorded in Matthew 28:18–20. He said as follows: . . .

“‘Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

“‘Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.’”

President Monson continued:

“What a promise! If we respond affirmatively to that sacred call, that binding authority, ‘I will be with you alway, even unto the end of the world.’ I can’t think of a greater promise” (“The Five M’s of Missionary Work,” *New Era*, Mar. 2007, 42).

In the Book of Mormon, Jacob, quoting Zenos, spoke of our task today in the allegory of the tame and wild olive trees:

“Wherefore, go to, and call servants, that we may labor diligently with our might in the vineyard, that we may prepare

the way, that I may bring forth again the natural fruit, which natural fruit is good and the most precious above all other fruit.

“Wherefore, let us go to and labor with our might this last time, for behold the end draweth nigh, and this is for the last time that I shall prune my vineyard” (Jacob 5:61–62).

The Savior’s call is to you of the rising generation. He is asking for worthy, prepared, faithful young men and young women who will heed the prophet’s voice, who will step up and say, as the Savior Himself said, “Here am I, send me” (Abraham 3:27). The need has never been greater. The field has never been whiter. You are called to go “this last time” (Jacob 5:62). There is no greater work; there is no greater call than teaching “all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 28:19).

I solemnly proclaim and testify that the heavens are open, that not only has God spoken but that He speaks today. His Son, Jesus Christ, lives and is inviting you, as He invited His Apostles of old, Peter and Andrew: “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19). May you respond as they did, by leaving your nets straightway and following Him.

I pray that you of this rising generation will stand up for truth and righteousness and understand your sacred call to go and teach all nations, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Uchtdorf

The choir and congregation will now join in singing “Hope of Israel.” At the conclusion of the singing, Elders Dale G. Renlund and Michael T. Ringwood of the Seventy will address us. They will be followed by Elder Joseph W. Sitati of the Seventy. Following Elder Sitati’s remarks, we will hear from Elder D. Todd

Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

The choir and congregation sang
“Hope of Israel.”

Elder Dale G. Renlund

“The ultimate operation”

In December 1967 the first successful heart transplant was performed in Cape Town, South Africa. The dying man’s diseased heart was removed, and a healthy heart from a deceased donor was sewn in its place. Since then, over 75,000 heart transplants have been performed worldwide.

In each heart transplant recipient, the patient’s own body recognizes the new, lifesaving heart as “foreign” and begins to attack it. Left unchecked, the body’s natural response will reject the new heart, and the recipient will die. Medicines can suppress this natural response, but the medications must be taken daily and with exactness. Furthermore, the condition of the new heart must be monitored. Occasional heart biopsies are performed wherein small pieces of heart tissue are removed and then examined under a microscope. When signs of rejection are found, medications are adjusted. If the rejection process is detected early enough, death can be averted.

Surprisingly, some patients become casual with their transplanted hearts. They skip their medicines here and there and obtain the needed follow-up less frequently than they should. They think that because they feel good, all is well. Too often this shortsighted attitude puts the patients at risk and shortens their lives.

A heart transplant can prolong life for years for people who would otherwise die from heart failure. But it is not “the ultimate operation,” as *Time* magazine called it in 1967.¹ The ultimate operation is not a physical but a spiritual “mighty change” of heart.²

Through the Atonement of Christ and by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel, we undergo this ultimate operation, this spiritual change of heart. As a result of our transgressions, our spiritual hearts have become diseased and hardened, making us subject to spiritual death and separation from our Heavenly Father. The Lord explained the operation that we all need: “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.”³

Just as with heart transplant patients, however, this mighty change of our spiritual hearts is just the beginning. Repentance, baptism, and confirmation are necessary but not sufficient. Indeed, equal, if not greater, care must be taken with a spiritually changed heart than with a physically transplanted heart if we are to endure to the end. Only by doing so can we be held guiltless at the time of judgment.⁴

Learning to endure to the end

Enduring to the end can be challenging because the tendency of the natural man is to reject the spiritually changed heart and allow it to harden. No wonder the Lord cautioned to “even let those who are sanctified take heed.”⁵

We all know of individuals who had this mighty change of heart but subsequently yielded to the natural man. They became casual in their worship and devotion to God, their hearts became hardened, and they thereby jeopardized their eternal salvation.

The lives of the people who were converted by the preaching of the sons of Mosiah offer some insights as to how one avoids rejecting the mightily changed spiritual heart. Of them, we read that “as many as were brought to the knowledge of the truth, through the preaching of Ammon and his brethren, . . . and were converted unto the Lord, never did fall away.”⁶

How did they successfully endure to the end? We know that they were “distinguished for their zeal towards God, and also towards men; for they were perfectly honest and upright in all things; and they were firm in the faith of Christ, even unto the end.”⁷

Their zeal towards God likely reflects an eagerness to please God and worship Him with fervor and passion. Their zeal towards men suggests an ardent interest in helping and serving others. Being perfectly upright and honest in all things suggests that they held their covenants firmly and did not rationalize their commitments to God or man. We further know that they taught their children the gospel in their homes. We know that they buried their weapons of war, distancing themselves from temptations.

They must have frequently assessed the condition of their spiritually changed hearts. They did not simply assume that all was well. By figuratively examining their changed hearts, they could identify any early hardening or rejection and treat it.

Alma the Younger poses a series of questions to contemporaries of the people of Ammon that figuratively biopsy spiritually changed hearts. Alma asks, “If ye have experienced a change of heart, and if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, I would ask, can ye feel so now?”⁸ He further asks if they have been sufficiently humble, free of pride and envy, and kind toward their fellowman.⁹ By honestly answering questions like these, we can correct early deviations from the strait and narrow path and keep our covenants with exactness.

The importance of small actions

In 1980 we moved as a family across the street from the hospital where I trained and worked. I worked every day, including Sundays. If I finished my Sunday work by 2:00 p.m., I could join my wife and daughter and drive to church for meetings that began at 2:30.

One Sunday late in my first year of training, I knew that I would likely finish by 2:00. I realized, however, that if I stayed in the hospital just a little longer, my wife and daughter would depart without me. I could then walk home and take a needed nap. I regret to say that I did just that. I waited until 2:15, walked home slowly, and lay down on the couch, hoping to nap. But I could not fall asleep. I was disturbed and concerned. I had always loved going to church. I wondered why on this day the fire of testimony and the zeal that I had previously felt were missing.

I did not have to think long. Because of my schedule, I had become casual with my prayers and scripture study. I would get up one morning, say my prayers, and go to work. Often day blended into night and into day again before I would return home late the following evening. I would then be so tired that I would fall asleep before saying a prayer or reading the scriptures. The next morning the process began again. The problem was that I was not doing the basic things I needed to do to keep my mightily changed heart from turning to stone.

I got off the couch, got on my knees, and pleaded with God for forgiveness. I promised my Heavenly Father that I would change. The next day I brought a Book of Mormon to the hospital. On my to-do list that day, and every day since, were two items: praying at least morning and evening and reading in the scriptures. Sometimes midnight would come, and I would have to quickly find a private place to pray. Some days my scripture study was brief. I also promised Heavenly Father that I would always try to get to church, even

if I missed part of the meeting. Over the course of a few weeks, the zeal returned and the fire of testimony burned fiercely again. I promised to never again fall into the spiritual death trap of being casual about these seemingly small actions and thereby jeopardizing things of an eternal nature, regardless of circumstances.

Eager to please God

To endure to the end, we need to be eager to please God and worship Him with fervor and passion. This means that we maintain faith in Jesus Christ by praying, studying the scriptures, partaking of the sacrament each week, and having the Holy Ghost as our constant companion. We need to actively help and serve others and share the gospel with them. We need to be perfectly upright and honest in all things, never compromising our covenants with God or our commitments to men, regardless of circumstances. In our homes we need to talk of, rejoice in, and preach of Christ so that our children—and we ourselves—will desire to apply the Atonement in our lives.¹⁰ We must identify temptations that easily beset us and put them out of reach—way out of reach. Finally, we need to frequently biopsy our

mightily changed hearts and reverse any signs of early rejection.

Please consider the state of your changed heart. Do you detect any rejection setting in as a result of the tendency of the natural man to become casual? If so, find a place where you too can kneel. Remember, more than mortal years on this earth are at stake. Do not risk forfeiting the fruits of the ultimate operation: eternal salvation and exaltation.

I pray that we may press forward with steadfast faith in Christ and endure joyfully to the end,¹¹ in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. “Surgery: The Ultimate Operation,” *Time*, Dec. 15, 1967, 64.
2. See Mosiah 5:2; Alma 5:12–14.
3. Ezekiel 36:26.
4. See 3 Nephi 27:16.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 20:34.
6. Alma 23:6.
7. Alma 27:27.
8. Alma 5:26.
9. See Alma 5:27–30.
10. See 2 Nephi 25:26.
11. See Dieter F. Uchtdorf, in Conference Report, Oct. 2007, 16–19; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 18–21.

Elder Michael T. Ringwood

An easiness and willingness to believe

Over the past several months I have been drawn repeatedly to a passage of scripture recorded in Helaman, chapter 6: “And thus we see that the Lord began to pour out his Spirit upon the Lamanites, because of their easiness and willingness to believe in his words” (verse 36).

As I read this scripture during my personal study, it touched my heart deeply and caused me to reflect upon it for several weeks. I began to question if I found it easy to believe the word of God. And why

was it easy for these Lamanite converts to believe? What happened to cause a people full of hatred and disbelief to have an easiness and willingness to believe in the word of God? (see 4 Nephi 1:39).

We learn about the cause of this change during a most remarkable year. During the 62nd year of the reign of the judges, 8,000 Lamanites in Zarahemla were converted as Nephi and Lehi taught with power and authority and had what they should teach given unto them (see Helaman 5:18–19). Three hundred others were converted through a miraculous

experience in which they heard a voice that did pierce them to the very soul (see Helaman 5:30). These 300 had gone forth to kill Nephi and Lehi as they sat in prison, but the 300 found themselves calling upon God when Aminadab, who was a former Nephite and dissenter from the Church, remembered and knew they should pray till they had faith in Christ (see Helaman 5:35–41). Many more Lamanites were converted through the testimony of the 300 as they ministered unto the people, declaring what they had seen and heard (see Helaman 5:49–50).

The account of the 62nd year ends with this statement: “All these things had happened and the Lamanites had become, the more part of them, a righteous people” (Helaman 6:1).

The quality of their conversion led these Lamanites to lay down their hatred for the Nephites and their weapons of war (see Helaman 5:51); they were firm and steadfast in their faith (see Helaman 6:1); they kept the commandments and walked in truth and uprightness (see Helaman 6:34); and they grew in their knowledge of God (see Helaman 6:34).

Yet most impressive to me was their easiness and willingness to believe in the word of God. This easiness and willingness to believe brought them the Spirit in great abundance and aided them to endure in faith to the end (see Helaman 15:5–9).

Sadly, during this same period of time, the more part of the Nephites became “hardened and impenitent and grossly wicked” (Helaman 6:2; see also verses 31–34). The opposite of what the Lamanites were experiencing was happening to the Nephites. The hardness of their hearts led to a withdrawal of the Spirit (see Helaman 6:35), while the softness of the hearts of the Lamanites led to an outpouring of the Spirit.

Softness of heart

As I pondered what caused this mighty change in the hearts of these Lamanites, I

came to realize this easiness and willingness to believe in the word of God comes from a softness of heart. It comes from having a heart that is sensitive to the Holy Ghost. It comes from having a heart that can love. It comes from having a heart that will make and keep sacred covenants. It comes from a soft heart that can feel the power of the Atonement of Christ.

This easiness to believe comes from the example of others who have soft hearts and who model this easiness to believe, such as Nephi and Lehi. Their father, Helaman, named them Nephi and Lehi to remind them of the faith of their fathers (see Helaman 5:6). Likewise, many of us have embedded in our names a legacy of faith from ancestors who had soft hearts and found it easy to believe the word of God. Some of these were like my great-great-grandfather Ephraim K. Hanks, who, when he found out his older brother had “gone off with the Mormons,” was determined to bring him back home. Not surprisingly, Ephraim moved to Nauvoo and was baptized soon after he heard his brother bear testimony of Joseph Smith and the restored gospel (see Richard K. Hanks, “Eph Hanks, Pioneer Scout” [master’s thesis, Brigham Young University, 1973], 18–21).

We are blessed with others in the scriptures who teach us how we can obtain an easiness and willingness to believe. Nephi, son of Lehi, is one example. His first act when he heard his father teach about the destruction of Jerusalem was to cry unto the Lord till his heart was soft and he believed all the words spoken by his father (see 1 Nephi 2:16). The Lord spoke directly to Nephi, saying, “Blessed art thou, Nephi, because of thy faith, for thou hast sought me diligently, with lowliness of heart” (1 Nephi 2:19). Nephi teaches the importance of desire and diligence in keeping commandments and calling upon God in order to have the ability to say with ease, “I will go and do” (1 Nephi 3:7).

From Enos we learn the importance of allowing the words of God to sink deep into our hearts till we hunger for truth (see Enos 1:3–4). An easiness to believe will come when the word of God is etched into our hearts (see Jeremiah 31:33; 2 Corinthians 3:3).

From the example of Lamoni's father, we learn the importance of a soft heart that is willing to change. Lamoni's father was willing to give up half of his kingdom to Ammon in exchange for his life (see Alma 20:21–23). After Ammon simply requested that the king allow Lamoni to worship as he desired in his own kingdom, the generosity and greatness of Ammon's words caused the king to be troubled in mind and heart (see Alma 20:24; 22:3). When Aaron arrived to teach the king, his heart had changed and he had an easiness to believe, as he said to Aaron, "Behold I will believe" (Alma 22:7). He then expressed a willingness to give up all he possessed, even to forsake his kingdom, to have the joy of the Lord (see Alma 22:15). When he first prayed, he offered that which Heavenly Father wanted when he said, "I will give away all my sins to know thee" (Alma 22:18). An easiness and willingness to believe the word of God will come from repentance and obedience.

Periods of easiness to believe

An examination of our lives will reveal periods when we found it easier to believe the word of God. Periods of significant change, such as marriage or the birth of a child; periods of intense service from a new calling or a mission; periods in our youth with a wonderful bishop, youth leaders, and seminary teachers; periods of trials; and periods of growth from learning for the first time about the gospel are all periods of an easiness to believe. Perhaps the most significant period is childhood. As a child, I found it easy to believe the word of God taught to me by valiant parents and grandparents. No wonder we are

admonished to become as little children to inherit eternal life (see 3 Nephi 11:38). No wonder we are taught to "bring up [our] children in light and truth" (D&C 93:40).

If you are like me, you will find what really brought an easiness and willingness to believe were not the circumstances but the commitment to live the gospel during these periods of life. You were found more often on your knees and immersed in the scriptures during these periods. You found it easier to gather for family home evening and family prayer. You found it easy to be in church and to worship in the temple. You found it easy to pay tithes and offerings. Indeed, the daily living of the gospel brings a softness of heart needed to have an easiness and willingness to believe the word of God.

The role of obedience

My testimony is that the teachings from our prophet and apostles in this conference, if followed, will lead to an easiness and willingness to believe in the word of God. We have been counseled to worship in the temple; to strengthen families through consistent family prayer, scripture study, and family home evening; to serve diligently in priesthood and Church callings; to pay tithes and offerings; to have faith and to pray for guidance; and to live worthy of the companionship of the Holy Ghost.

Often we are like Naaman, the Syrian leper who was sent to the prophet in Israel to be cleansed. When Elisha simply sent a messenger with instructions to dip seven times in the Jordan River, Naaman went away angry. Thankfully, he had a servant who said, "If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?" (2 Kings 5:13).

I witness that this easiness and willingness to believe will come from doing those

seemingly insignificant things taught to us repeatedly since our youth. Obedience will bring soft hearts and an easiness to believe in the word of God. I bear witness that an easiness to believe will bring an outpouring of the Spirit.

A test to measure our easiness and willingness to believe can occur each week as we attend sacrament meeting. In this meeting we renew covenants by expressing our willingness to take upon ourselves the name of Christ, to always remember Him, and to keep His commandments (see D&C 20:77). As we sit in sacrament meeting, we should find it easy to make these covenants and easy to listen and learn through the Holy Ghost.

I long to have the Spirit of the Lord poured out upon me because of my “easiness and willingness to believe in his words.” I have felt that this scripture has awakened me to a sense of my “duty to God”—that I should “be submissive and gentle; easy to be entreated; full of patience; . . . diligent in keeping the commandments of God at all times; . . . always returning thanks unto God for whatsoever things [I] receive” (Alma 7:22–23).

May we always find it easy to believe His word. May you with easiness declare, as do I, that Jesus is the Son of God. He is our Shepherd, and those with an easiness and willingness to believe will know His voice. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Joseph W. Sitati

A global faith

A few weeks ago Elder Melvin R. Perkins, who is an Area Seventy serving in Alaska, and I stood at the pulpit in front of the congregation of the Vancouver British Columbia Stake in Canada. In a moving voice he invited the Saints to consider the image before them: a descendant of Mormon handcart pioneers and a pioneer convert of the Church from a faraway African nation serving the Lord side by side.

From humble beginnings in Fayette, New York, nearly 180 years ago, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has become a global faith. I stand here as a witness of this marvelous work. I pray that the Spirit of the Lord will be with you and with me as I share some thoughts this afternoon.

I am grateful for the keys of revelation in this last dispensation. Through the exercise of those keys by living prophets since the Restoration, God’s children on the earth today have the opportunity to

understand His plan of happiness for them more fully than at any other time.

The love of our Father in Heaven has been evident as the way has been opened for all living and dead of every nation, now and in the future, to receive exaltation in His presence, according to the exercise of their agency. The standard is the same, and the blessing is the same for all. God has reaffirmed that He is no respecter of persons.

The pattern of gospel dispensations

The gospel has gone forth on the earth in a pattern that ensures that God’s purposes to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man are fulfilled.

After the Fall our first parents, Adam and Eve, made an eternal covenant with God for their salvation.¹ As Adam’s children multiplied, two groups emerged.

One group, led by Enoch, kept the covenant so well that they could no longer be retained on the earth. So the Lord gathered them unto Himself.²

The second group was overcome in wickedness so great that they suffered the judgments of God. The Flood swallowed them up, leaving only the family of Noah,³ a righteous descendant of Enoch.⁴

God put Noah under covenant, with the additional promise that life on earth would no longer be destroyed by floods.⁵

As Noah's family multiplied once more, many were taken up in wickedness. Driven by pride, they built the Tower of Babel. God allowed the judgments of heaven to fall upon them. Their language was confounded, and they were scattered abroad. Only a few who were obedient were preserved.⁶

Among those preserved was the brother of Jared, a man of great faith, who pleaded with the Lord on behalf of the righteous Jaredites. The Lord led them to the American continent, with the promise that if they served Him, they would "be free from bondage, and from captivity, and from all other nations under heaven."⁷ The Nephites were also led to the same continent later. In the end both the Jaredite and the Nephite civilizations were destroyed, as they did not prove faithful.

Another preserved man of great faith was Abraham, a descendant of Noah, who was led to Canaan. God put Abraham under covenant, with additional promises that his posterity would increase as the stars in the heavens⁸ and that in his seed "shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."⁹ The nations in the promise were descendants of Noah scattered from the Tower of Babel, known as Gentiles in a general sense.

God renewed the covenant with Abraham's son Isaac and grandson Jacob, who became Israel.

Because the descendants of Israel could not endure the conditions of the covenant, it was changed during the dispensation of Moses. A lesser covenant was introduced and continued among the children of Israel until Christ restored the fulness of the gospel during His mortal ministry.¹⁰

Ministry to the Gentiles

After His Resurrection the Savior signaled that the time for the gospel to be taken to the Gentiles had come.¹¹ Earlier, in the parable of the laborers in the vineyard, He had revealed that the gentile nations would be visited and invited one after the other. However, the blessings would be the same irrespective of the order of invitation.¹²

After the Savior's Ascension, the presiding Apostle, Peter, a descendant of Israel, held the keys of the priesthood, by which he gave direction to the Church. It is significant that although the Savior had already given permission, Peter baptized the first Gentile, Cornelius, only after receiving specific revelation to do so.¹³

The ministry to the Gentiles was interrupted by the martyrdom of Peter¹⁴ and the deaths of the other Apostles, after which the keys of the priesthood were taken from the earth. The long period of apostasy followed.

The keys were restored by the ancient Apostles Peter, James, and John in 1829 upon Joseph Smith just before the Church was organized. The gospel in its fulness was again coming to the earth and started to go forth among the nations of the Gentiles as the new and everlasting covenant.

Through the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord revealed that the determining criteria for the order in which the gentile nations are invited include the capacity to spiritually and temporally nourish the kingdom of God as it is established on the earth for the last time.¹⁵

We see that as the restored Church began to be established on the earth, the living prophets sought and followed the will of God about how the gospel should go forth among the nations.

I have lived to see the time foreseen by the prophet Zenos in the allegory of the olive tree, when the righteous from all nations of the earth would become partakers of the covenant of God with Israel.¹⁶

Fruit of the gospel in Africa

I have seen the good fruit of the gospel blossom in my home continent of Africa. After just 30 years, there are 300,000 Saints. In the doctrines and principles of the restored gospel, many are finding a sure anchor for their faith. Families uprooted from their rural communities in search of a better future in the towns and cities have found a new way to hold on to the strong family traditions which have come progressively under attack in this era of globalization. The Spirit of the Lord is moving powerfully among the people.

A new celestial culture is developing in homes, nurtured by the ready hearkening to the counsel of the living prophet to have daily prayer and scripture study and to meet once a week as a family in home evening. As a result, many are able to break free from the shackles of traditions that restrict the exercise of their agency.

As an illustration from personal experience, three of our children were recently married in the temple without the encumbrance of dowry, a traditional practice that drives many young men and women to live together without any legal commitment to each other. The opportunity for a temple marriage in the three temples now established in Accra, Ghana; Aba, Nigeria;

and Johannesburg, South Africa, is helping to instill a fresh hope in the sanctity of marriage.

I testify of the Savior Jesus Christ, by whom we have the gospel and promise of exaltation. I testify of our living prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, through whom we have the assurance of the Savior's direction for continuing to extend salvation to all. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See Moses 6:52, 57, 59.
2. See Moses 7:19–21.
3. See Genesis 6:17–22; see also Moses 7–8.
4. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:14–15.
5. See Genesis 8:11–21; 9:8–11.
6. See Genesis 11:1–8.
7. See Ether 2:8–12; see also Ether 1:33–43; 4–6.
8. See Genesis 12–17; 22; see also Abraham 1–2.
9. Genesis 22:18.
10. See Hebrews 7:11–12, 19–22; Doctrine and Covenants 84:24–25.
11. See Matthew 28:18–20.
12. See Matthew 20:1–16.
13. See Acts 10.
14. See Bible Dictionary, “Peter,” 749.
15. See Doctrine and Covenants 58:1–12.
16. See Jacob 5:57–68.

Elder D. Todd Christofferson

Interview for officer candidate school

During World War II, President James E. Faust, then a young enlisted man in the United States Army, applied for officer candidate school. He appeared before a board of inquiry composed of what he described as “hard-bitten career soldier[s].” After a while their questions turned to matters of religion. The final questions were these:

“In times of war should not the moral code be relaxed? Does not the stress of battle justify men in doing things that they would not do when at home under normal situations?”

President Faust relates:

“I recognized that here was a chance perhaps to make some points and look broad-minded. I knew perfectly well that the men who were asking me this question did not live by the standards that I had been taught. The thought flashed through

my mind that perhaps I could say that I had my own beliefs but did not wish to impose them on others. But there seemed to flash before my mind the faces of the many people to whom I had taught the law of chastity as a missionary. In the end I simply said, ‘I do not believe there is a double standard of morality.’

“I left the hearing resigned to the fact that [they] would not like the answers I had given . . . and would surely score me very low. A few days later when the scores were posted, to my astonishment I had passed. I was in the first group taken for officer’s candidate school! . . .

“This was one of the critical crossroads of my life.”¹

President Faust recognized that we all possess the God-given gift of moral agency—the right to make choices and the obligation to account for those choices (see D&C 101:78). He also understood and demonstrated that, for positive outcomes, moral agency must be accompanied by moral discipline.

Moral discipline

By “moral discipline,” I mean self-discipline based on moral standards. Moral discipline is the consistent exercise of agency to choose the right because it is right, even when it is hard. It rejects the self-absorbed life in favor of developing character worthy of respect and true greatness through Christlike service (see Mark 10:42–45). The root of the word *discipline* is shared by the word *disciple*, suggesting to the mind the fact that conformity to the example and teachings of Jesus Christ is the ideal discipline that, coupled with His grace, forms a virtuous and morally excellent person.

Jesus’s own moral discipline was rooted in His discipleship to the Father. To His disciples He explained, “My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work” (John 4:34). By this same pattern, our moral discipline is rooted in

loyalty and devotion to the Father and the Son. It is the gospel of Jesus Christ that provides the moral certainty upon which moral discipline rests.

The societies in which many of us live have for more than a generation failed to foster moral discipline. They have taught that truth is relative and that everyone decides for himself or herself what is right. Concepts such as sin and wrong have been condemned as “value judgments.” As the Lord describes it, “Every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own god” (D&C 1:16).

As a consequence, self-discipline has eroded and societies are left to try to maintain order and civility by compulsion. The lack of internal control by individuals breeds external control by governments. One columnist observed that “gentlemanly behavior,” for example, once “protected women from coarse behavior. Today, we expect sexual harassment laws to restrain coarse behavior. . . .

“Policemen and laws can never replace customs, traditions and moral values as a means for regulating human behavior. At best, the police and criminal justice system are the last desperate line of defense for a civilized society. Our increased reliance on laws to regulate behavior is a measure of how uncivilized we’ve become.”²

In most of the world, we have been experiencing an extended and devastating economic recession. It was brought on by multiple causes, but one of the major causes was widespread dishonest and unethical conduct, particularly in the U.S. housing and financial markets. Reactions have focused on enacting more and stronger regulation. Perhaps that may dissuade some from unprincipled conduct, but others will simply get more creative in their circumvention.³ There could never be enough rules so finely crafted as to anticipate and cover every situation, and even if there were, enforcement would be impossibly expensive and burdensome. This approach leads to diminished freedom

for everyone. In the memorable phrase of Bishop Fulton J. Sheen, “We would not accept the yoke of Christ; so now we must tremble at the yoke of Caesar.”⁴

In the end, it is only an internal moral compass in each individual that can effectively deal with the root causes as well as the symptoms of societal decay. Societies will struggle in vain to establish the common good until sin is denounced as sin and moral discipline takes its place in the pantheon of civic virtues.⁵

Teaching in the home

Moral discipline is learned at home. While we cannot control what others may or may not do, the Latter-day Saints can certainly stand with those who demonstrate virtue in their own lives and inculcate virtue in the rising generation. Remember from Book of Mormon history the young men who were key to the Nephite victory in the long war of 66 to 60 B.C.—the sons of the people of Ammon. Their character and discipline were described in these words:

“They were men who were true at all times in whatsoever thing they were entrusted.

“Yea, they were men of truth and soberness, for they had been taught to keep the commandments of God and to walk uprightly before him” (Alma 53:20–21).

“Now they never had fought, yet they did not fear death; and they did think more upon the liberty of their fathers than they did upon their lives; yea, they had been taught by their mothers, that if they did not doubt, God would deliver them” (Alma 56:47).

“Now this was the faith of these of whom I have spoken; they are young, and their minds are firm, and they do put their trust in God continually” (Alma 57:27).

Here we find a standard for what should happen in our homes and in the Church. Our teaching should draw upon our own faith and focus first and foremost on instilling faith in God in the rising generation.

We must declare the essential need to keep the commandments of God and to walk uprightly before Him in soberness, or in other words, with reverence. Each must be persuaded that service and sacrifice for the well-being and happiness of others are far superior to making one’s own comfort and possessions the highest priority.

This requires more than an occasional reference to one or another gospel principle. There must be *constant* teaching, mostly by example. President Henry B. Eyring expressed the vision we strive to attain:

“The pure gospel of Jesus Christ must go down into the hearts of [our children] by the power of the Holy Ghost. It will not be enough for them to have had a spiritual witness of the truth and to want good things later. It will not be enough for them to hope for some future cleansing and strengthening. Our aim must be for them to become truly converted to the restored gospel of Jesus Christ while they are with us. . . .

“Then they will have gained a strength from what they are, not only from what they know. They will become disciples of Christ.”⁶

Fallacy of parents being neutral

I have heard a few parents state that they don’t want to impose the gospel on their children but want them to make up their own minds about what they will believe and follow. They think that in this way they are allowing children to exercise their agency. What they forget is that the intelligent use of agency requires knowledge of the truth, of things as they really are (see D&C 93:24). Without that, young people can hardly be expected to understand and evaluate the alternatives that come before them. Parents should consider how the adversary approaches their children. He and his followers are not promoting objectivity but are vigorous, multimedia advocates of sin and selfishness.

Seeking to be neutral about the gospel is, in reality, to reject the existence of God and His authority. We must, rather, acknowledge Him and His omniscience if we want our children to see life's choices clearly and be able to think for themselves. They should not have to learn by sad experience that "wickedness never was happiness" (Alma 41:10).

I can share with you a simple example from my own life of what parents can do. When I was about five or six years old, I lived across the street from a small grocery store. One day two other boys invited me to go with them to the store. As we stood coveting the candy for sale there, the older boy grabbed a candy bar and slipped it into his pocket. He urged the other boy and me to do the same, and after some hesitation we did. Then we quickly left the store and ran off in separate directions. I found a hiding place at home and tore off the candy wrapper. My mother discovered me with the chocolate evidence smeared on my face and escorted me back to the grocery store. As we crossed the street, I was sure I was facing life imprisonment. With sobs and tears, I apologized to the owner and paid him for the candy bar with a dime that my mother had loaned me (which I had to earn later). My mother's love and discipline put an abrupt and early end to my life of crime.

Dealing with temptations

All of us experience temptations. So did the Savior, but He "gave no heed unto them" (D&C 20:22). Similarly, we do not have to yield simply because a temptation surfaces. We may want to, but we don't have to. An incredulous female friend asked a young adult woman, committed to living the law of chastity, how it was possible that she had never "slept with anybody." "Don't you *want* to?" the friend asked. The young woman thought: "The question intrigued me, because it was so utterly beside the point. . . . Mere want-

ing is hardly a proper guide for moral conduct."⁷

In some cases, temptation may have the added force of potential or actual addiction. I am grateful that for an increasing number of people the Church can provide therapeutic help of various kinds to aid them in avoiding or coping with addictions. Even so, while therapy can support a person's will, it cannot substitute for it. Always and ever, there must be an exercise of discipline—moral discipline founded on faith in God the Father and the Son and what They can achieve with us through the atoning grace of Jesus Christ. In Peter's words, "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations" (2 Peter 2:9).

Blessings of moral discipline

We cannot presume that the future will resemble the past—that things and patterns we have relied upon economically, politically, socially will remain as they have been. Perhaps our moral discipline, if we will cultivate it, will have an influence for good and inspire others to pursue the same course. We may thereby have an impact on future trends and events. At a minimum, moral discipline will be of immense help to us as we deal with whatever stresses and challenges may come in a disintegrating society.

We have heard thoughtful and inspired messages during this conference, and in a moment President Thomas S. Monson will provide concluding words of counsel. As we prayerfully consider what we have learned and relearned, I believe that the Spirit will shed further light on those things that have particular application for each of us individually. We will be fortified in the moral discipline needed to walk uprightly before the Lord and be at one with Him and the Father.

I stand with my brethren and with you, my brothers and sisters, as a witness that God is our Father and that His Son, Jesus, is our Redeemer. Their law is immutable,

Their truth is everlasting, and Their love is infinite. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. James E. Faust, *Stories from My Life* (2001), 2–3.
2. Walter Williams, “Laws Are a Poor Substitute for Common Decency, Moral Values,” *Deseret News*, Apr. 29, 2009, A15.
3. Speaking some years ago to members of the legal profession, President James E. Faust cautioned: “There is a great risk in justifying what we do individually and professionally on the basis of what is ‘legal’ rather than what is ‘right.’ In so doing, we put our very souls at risk. The philosophy that what is legal is also right will rob us of what is highest and best in our nature. What conduct is actually legal is, in many instances, way below the standards of a civilized society and light years below the teachings of the Christ. If you accept what is legal as your standard of personal or professional conduct, you will deny yourself of that which is truly noble in your personal dignity and worth” (“Be Healers,” *Clark Memorandum*, spring 2003, 3).
4. “Bishop Fulton John Sheen Makes a Wartime Plea,” in William Safire, sel., *Lend Me Your Ears: Great Speeches in History*, rev. ed. (1997), 478.
5. Editorial writers at the *Wall Street Journal* once observed:

“Sin isn’t something that many people, including most churches, have spent much time talking about or worrying about through the years of the [sexual] revolution. But we will say this for sin: it at least offered a frame of reference for personal behavior. When the frame was

dismantled, guilt wasn’t the only thing that fell away; we also lost the guidewire of personal responsibility. . . .

- “The United States has a drug problem and a high-school-sex problem and a welfare problem and an AIDS problem and a rape problem. None of this will go away until more people in positions of responsibility are willing to come forward and explain, in frankly moral terms, that some of the things that people do nowadays are wrong” (“The Joy of What?” *Wall Street Journal*, Dec. 12, 1991, A14).
6. Henry B. Eyring, in Shaun D. Stahle, “Inspiring Students to Stand Strong amid Torrent of Temptation,” *Church News*, Aug. 18, 2001, 5.
 7. Sarah E. Hinlicky, “Subversive Virginity,” *First Things*, Oct. 1998, 14.

President Uchtdorf

As we conclude the conference, we express appreciation and love to the Tabernacle Choir, the combined ward choir from stakes in Bountiful and Farmington, Utah, and the Aaronic Priesthood choir from stakes in West Jordan, Utah, and their conductors and organists for the beautiful and inspiring music. We also extend thanks to all who have participated in any way in these proceedings.

Brothers and sisters, our concluding speaker at this session and this conference will be our beloved prophet, President Thomas S. Monson. Following his remarks, the choir will sing “Lord, Dismiss Us with Thy Blessing.” After the music, the benediction will be offered by Elder W. Douglas Shumway, who was released yesterday as a member of the Seventy. This conference will then be adjourned.

President Thomas S. Monson

Expressions of gratitude

My heart is full as we come to the close of this conference. We have been richly

taught and spiritually edified as we have listened to the messages which have been presented and the testimonies which have been borne. We express thanks to each

one who has participated, including those brethren offering prayers.

Once again the music has been wonderful. I express my personal gratitude for those willing to share with us their talents, touching and inspiring us in the process. The beautiful music they produce enhances and enriches each session of conference.

We remind you that the messages we have heard during this conference will be printed in the November issues of the *Ensign* and *Liahona* magazines. As we read and study them, we will be additionally taught and inspired. May we incorporate into our daily lives the truths found therein.

We express to those brethren who have been released during this conference our deep appreciation. They have served well and have made significant contributions to the work of the Lord. Their dedication has been complete. We thank them from the bottom of our hearts.

The Lord is mindful of us

We live at a time when many in the world have slipped from the moorings of safety found in compliance with the commandments. It is a time of permissiveness, with society in general routinely disregarding and breaking the laws of God. We often find ourselves swimming against the current, and sometimes it seems as though the current could carry us away.

I am reminded of the words of the Lord found in the book of Ether in the Book of Mormon. Said the Lord, “Ye cannot cross this great deep save I prepare you against the waves of the sea, and the winds which have gone forth, and the floods which shall come.”¹ My brothers and sisters, He has prepared us. If we heed His words and live the commandments, we will survive this time of permissiveness and wickedness—a time which can be compared with the waves and the winds and the floods that can destroy. He is ever mindful of

us. He loves us and will bless us as we do what is right.

How grateful we are that the heavens are indeed open, that the gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored, and that the Church is founded on the rock of revelation. We are a blessed people, with apostles and prophets upon the earth today.

We all have a part to play

Now, as we leave this conference, I invoke the blessings of heaven upon each of you. May all of you return safely to your homes. As you ponder the things you have heard during this conference, may you say, with the people of King Benjamin who all cried with one voice, “We believe all the words which thou hast spoken unto us; and also, we know of their surety and truth, because of the Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent, which has wrought a mighty change in us . . . that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually.”² May every man and woman, boy and girl leave this conference a better person than he or she was when it began two days ago.

I love you, my brothers and sisters. I pray for you. I would ask once again that you would remember me and all the General Authorities in your prayers. We are one with you in moving forward this marvelous work. I testify to you that we are all in this together and that every man, woman, and child has a part to play. May God give us the strength and the ability and the determination to play our part well.

I bear my testimony to you that this work is true, that our Savior lives, and that He guides and directs His Church here upon the earth. I leave with you my witness and my testimony that God our Eternal Father lives and loves us. He is indeed our Father, and He is personal and real.

May God bless you. May His promised peace be with you now and always.

I bid you farewell until we meet again in six months’ time, and do so in the name

of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer and our Advocate with the Father, amen.

NOTES

1. Ether 2:25.
2. Mosiah 5:2.

The choir sang “Lord, Dismiss Us with Thy Blessing.”

Elder W. Douglas Shumway offered the benediction.

SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for the Saturday morning, Sunday morning, and Sunday afternoon sessions. Mack Wilberg and Ryan Murphy directed the choir. Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Andrew Unsworth, Bonnie Goodliffe, and Linda Margetts were the organists.

A combined ward choir from stakes in Bountiful and Farmington, Utah, provided music for the Saturday afternoon session. Michael Huff directed the choir, and Linda Margetts was the organist.

An Aaronic Priesthood choir from stakes in West Jordan, Utah, provided the music for the priesthood session. Neil Hendriksen directed the choir, and Andrew Unsworth was the organist.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the organ were played by Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Andrew Unsworth, Bonnie Goodliffe, and Linda Margetts.

Brook P. Hales

Clerk of the Conference

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